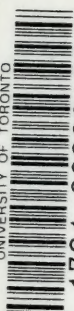


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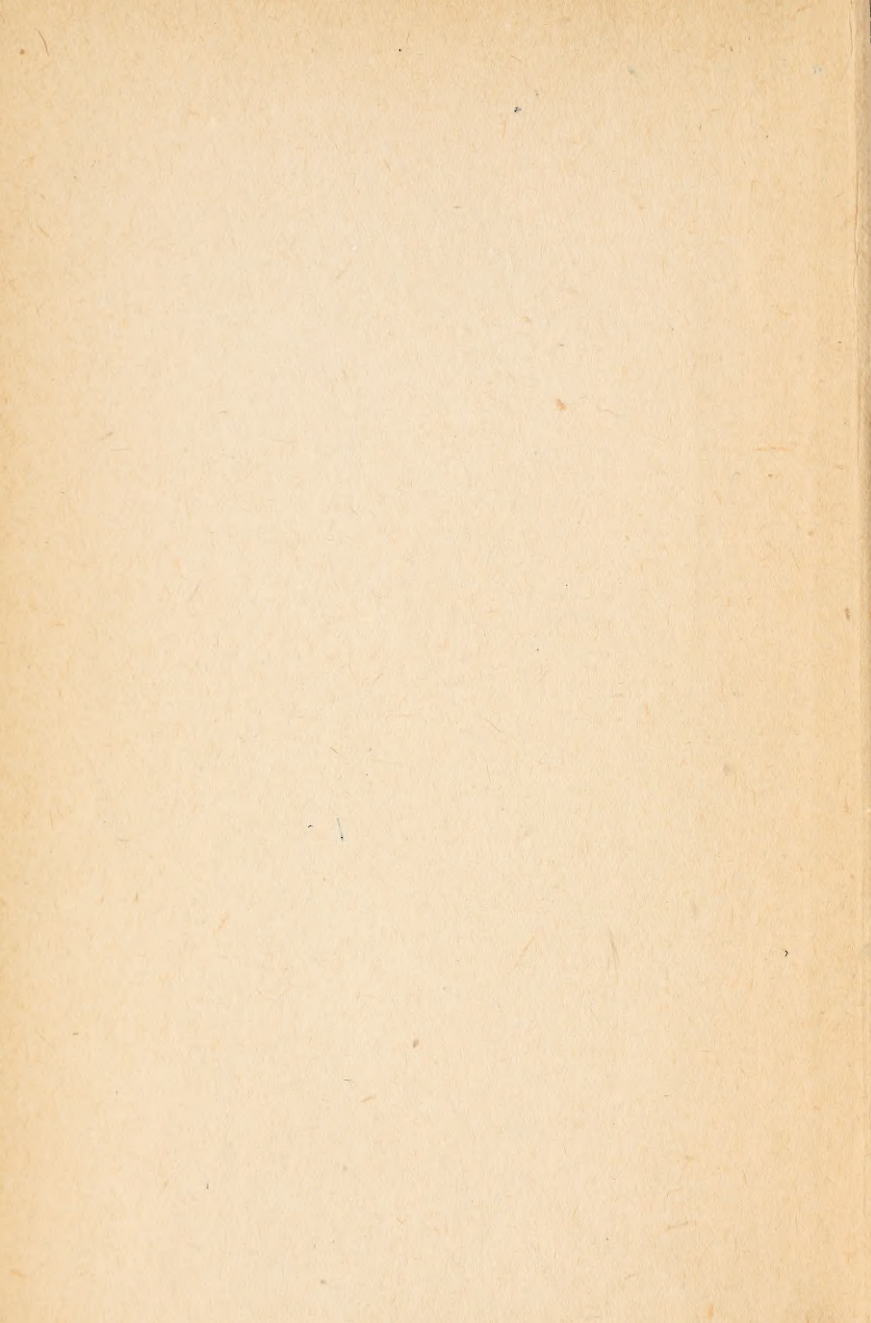
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Front—"Bismarck."



BISMARCK



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BISMARCK

CHAPTER I

YEARS OF PREPARATION

Years of childhood and youth—Legal beginnings—Life in the country—Marriage—Diet of 1847—The days of March at Berlin in 1848—Parliament of Frankfort—The Olmütz Interview—At the Diet of Frankfort—Journeys to Vienna and Paris—Relations with the Prince Regent.

OTTO EDUARD LEOPOLD VON BISMARCK was born on the 1st of April, 1815, at Schönhausen, a village of Brandenburg in the Kingdom of Prussia. The place and date are of interest in the history of the man who was one day to make the greatness of Prussia, the unity of Germany, and the calamity of Europe.

Schönhausen, situated about five miles from the right shores of the Elbe, and actually in the province of Saxon Prussia, had been the patrimonial residence of the Bismarcks since the sixteenth century. The father and mother of the future Chancellor had there recently undergone a painful ordeal. The 14th of October, 1806, had seen the downfall of the Prussian monarchy; in the words of Heine, Napoleon had breathed on Prussia and Prussia had ceased to exist. Some days after the catastrophe of Jena, when the dis-

Bismarck

tracted Prussians were fleeing before the victors, the Bismarcks had abandoned their estate. Soult's regiments, marching on Berlin, had passed through the property, and had paid little respect to it. A great genealogical tree hung on one of the walls of the hall; it was the pride of the family, for, in a purely imaginary fashion, it traced the descent of the Bismarcks from the eighth century, from the time of Charlemagne. Soult's soldiers, showing no respect for this piece of antiquity, had slashed it about with their bayonets, and when the Bismarcks came back to their home, the famous genealogical tree was nothing but a ruin. More than once, in his childhood, the young Otto heard this episode of the passing of the French recounted.

Up to 1815 there had been trying hours at Schönhausen, but the Battle of Leipzig had brought back victory. In 1815, the very year of the birth of Bismarck, one after the other the Treaties of Vienna and the Battle of Waterloo had consolidated the political and military triumph of Prussia. France, in her turn, under the most stern conditions, was suffering the law of the vanquished. The genealogical tree of Schönhausen was amply avenged.

Bismarck used to say, à propos of his origin, that "he had in his veins both the blood of a cuirassier and the blood of a professor"; and, expressing it in a different fashion, "I come alternatively of a generation that gets thrashed and a generation that thrashes." He who, at the time of his disgrace, was to receive the grade of General of Cavalry

with the rank of Field-Marshal, loved to recall the military character of his forbears. "There is not one of my ancestors that did not draw the sword. My father and his three brothers. My grandfather was at Rosbach; he fought against Louis XV, and my great-grandfather against Louis XIV, in the little wars on the Rhine in 1672-5. Besides, a great many of my ancestors took part in the Thirty Years' War, some for the Empire, others in the Swedish ranks." The family bore this disquieting device: *Noch lange nicht genug* (Far from being enough).

This family, with its military traditions, had been settled for several generations in the middle Marches of Brandenburg, which were the cradle of the Prussian monarchy; it belonged to the small provincial nobility, whose whole ideal was to serve in the Army and to cultivate their poor estates. They were squireens—*Junkers*, as the Germans say, with the narrow conservative ideas and reactionary fierceness the word implies.

The Chancellor's father had retired early from military service to employ himself in the improvement of his property; he had married Luisa Wilhelmina Mencken, who belonged to a family of professors and lawyers. Of this marriage were born six children, of whom only three survived—an elder brother of the Chancellor, the Chancellor, and a younger sister, Malvina, who was always greatly attached to him, and who married a Count von Arnim.

Bismarck's childhood was spent on an estate at

Kneiphof in Pomerania. The open-air life in a harsh climate helped to develop his powerful frame, and gave him the love of the country he kept till the end of his life. "I have always had," he used to say, "an immense and quite romantic love for the country, for the fields and woods, for uncultivated nature. The only equal passion I have is for animals." His mastiff, Tyras, was his inseparable companion in his old age ; he had been called the *Reichshund*—the dog of the Empire.

From his sixth year to his eleventh the young Otto was brought up at the Plamann Institute in Berlin, a fashionable school, though its iron discipline left unpleasant memories in his mind ; according to him, it was "a sort of House of Correction." Sent later to the Friedrich-Wilhelm Gymnasium, and then to the Grey-Cloister Gymnasium, his studies were of an adequate kind ; he gained a fair knowledge of French and English. Later on he learned Russian, and on this account could rightly congratulate himself on being able to treat directly with the Ministers of the Tsar without having recourse to an intermediary, and without being understood by the other diplomats, who could use only French.

Bismarck began his "Thoughts and Memories" with this view of himself at the end of his secondary studies, when he was about seventeen :

"A normal product of our official teaching, when, at Easter 1832, I left the Gymnasium, I was a Pantheist ; moreover, if not a republican, I was at least convinced that a Republic was the most

rational form of government ; and, in addition, I used to rack my brains to discover the motives sufficient to induce millions of men to submit during their whole life to the will of one alone."

But these republican and levelling fancies were but a fire of straw.

"An absolute devotion to the Prussian monarchy had been inculcated on me from the cradle. . . . I remained faithful to the defenders of authority. To the boy imbued with the belief in authority, Harmodius and Aristogiton, as well as Brutus, were common criminals and William Tell a rebel and assassin."

In a word, the young *Junker* of Schönhausen belonged body and soul to Prussia, of which it has been said, with good cause, that it is less a nation than a system, having State Policy for its basis, war for its industry, and, for instruments, the barrack, the school, and officials brought up in the idea that humanity begins only with the Baron.

In the month of May 1832, when he was seventeen, Bismarck was entered as a student in the Faculty of Law at the University of Göttingen ; at this time, according to him, he was slender, lean, and "as thin as a knitting-needle."

There would be little to be told of his studies ; of his school-boy pranks, his coarse jests, his duels (there were as many as twenty-eight of them), his eccentricities, much might be said. It is much more interesting to recall that he had definitely taken up his position in the ranks of the reactionary party. "I was too well trained *à la Prussienne*

Bismarck

not to be disagreeably impressed by the attempt on the established political order by a revolutionary and noisy crew."

It is well to take note of another sentiment, thenceforth imprinted on his mind.

"If I let my eyes fall on the map of Europe, it maddened me to think that France had kept Strasburg."

His student life came to an end at the Berlin University in 1835, at the age of twenty.

Great eater, great drinker, great blusterer, easily made violent and brutal, this giant of more than six feet high gave the impression of a character but ill-balanced, concerned above all in making himself singular by his extravagances.

All this seemed unlikely to fit Bismarck for the diplomatic career about which he was vaguely thinking. He consulted Ancillon, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who absolutely dissuaded him—his appearance was too much against it. Then he fell back upon a judicial career, as a temporary makeshift. He made his *début*, when he was twenty, at the Berlin Tribunal, as a Referendary, an office much like that of a Registrar. He had to settle divorce matters, and he was not interested in trying to reconcile a drunken husband with a recalcitrant wife. He then took the course of passing the State examination necessary for entering the administrative career, and after this examination he received a nomination as Referendary at Aix-la-Chapelle, and afterwards at Potsdam. But the

His *début* in
the Magis-
tracy

passive nature of these duties did not suit his combative temperament ; he wrote to his father at that time : “ The Prussian official is like a musician in an orchestra : he plays the first violin or the triangle without a glance at, or an influence on, the thing as a whole ; he must play his part as it is given to him, whether he thinks it good or bad. I want to make music as I think proper, or not at all.”

The time for military service came ; he spent it in the regiment of Infantry of the Guards.

The death of his mother and reverses of fortune abruptly brought about his discharge and a complete change of life. He went to settle at Kneiphof in Pomerania to cultivate a family estate.

From 1839 to 1847 there were eight years of country life, where, under the roughest conditions, Bismarck led the life of a country gentleman—a *Landjunker* ; but he was better pleased with it all than with the business of sorting documents and papers and putting them in boxes.

Life in the country

“ Sooner or later,” he said, “ the moment will come when we shall sink under the burden of our waste-paper habit, and shall be crushed by the inferior bureaucracy.”

At Kneiphof existence was hard ; with very mediocre resources the cultivation of an estate that had been well-nigh abandoned had to be undertaken, and everything went wrong. He wrote to his sister :

“ It is with the greatest difficulty that I resist the desire to fill my letter with lamentations over

the management of my land—the night-frosts, the sick cattle, the poor-looking colza, the dead lambs, the hungry sheep, the scarcity of straw, of potatoes, of manure, and of money.

“It will be difficult to pull through this year with this bad harvest, prices so low, and this long winter.”

But to have to grapple with a thousand difficulties suited a nature to which fighting was a need and a pleasure. At this epoch of his life he thus described his ideal :

“I quite expected to live and die in the country after gaining some success as an agriculturist ; and after having, perhaps, won some laurels in war, if one broke out. If, as a country gentleman, I still had some ambition, it was quite simply to be a brave lieutenant of the *Landwehr*.”

The country life he leads continuously develops the great strength of his constitution ; he is perpetually scouring his estate on horseback ; he trains himself for violent exercise. “If I say that I have fallen from my horse fifty times, I believe that would be below the mark. Last time I broke three ribs, and I thought that was an end of me. Twice before the doctor had declared that by scientific rules I ought not to have recovered.”

His violent exercises, his excesses in eating and drinking, the roughness of his discourse stamped with the most retrograde notions—all these extravagances had gained for him, among his neighbours, the nickname of “the mad squire” (*der tolle Junker*).

But this odd character, built in a fashion very unlike that of the rest of the world, was like a professional in the cultivation of his estate. In spite of a succession of bad seasons, he succeeded in drawing from the sterile soil of his moors and Pomeranian forests revenues they had not yet yielded.

This was quite in harmony with the temperament of the *Junkers*, who, by dint of labour and perseverance, have managed to improve the unproductive soil of the North of Germany.

His father died in 1845, when he himself was thirty years old, and he went to settle at Schönhofen, his birthplace. There it was still the open-air life, the same sort of occupations. He was elected Captain of the Elbe Dykes, an office which necessitated continual supervision; for the Elbe, in that flat and marshy country, divides into several branches, of which some mingle with the neighbouring Havel. To prevent these inundations, it was necessary that the dykes should be kept in perfect order. The new Captain conscientiously fulfilled his duties.

A letter written at this time may give an idea of his turn of mind. In the summer of 1844, when he was at the sea-baths at Norderney, he wrote his impressions to his dear sister Malvina.

“Lest the eye should envy the palate, they’ve put a lady beside me at table, whose aspect makes me melancholy and home-sick, for she reminds me of von Pfeiffer at Kneiphof when he was at his thinnest. Opposite sits the former

Minister, Z., with one of those faces that appear to one in dreams when one is not well; he's like a big frog without legs. For every morsel he is going to devour he opens his mouth as far as his shoulders. He looks to me like a travelling-bag you open to put something in. When I see this I'm taken with giddiness, and, for fear of falling, I seize hold of the edge of the table. Near me there's also a Russian officer; he's a good fellow, but when I look at his tall, slim figure, and his short legs, curved like a Turkish sabre, the thought of a boot-jack invariably comes into my head."

About his thirtieth year Bismarck experienced a religious crisis, and the vague Pantheism he had inherited from his mother gave place to a more precise belief. Becoming an orthodox Lutheran, he took to reading the Bible, and did not fail to receive the Sacrament on solemn occasions, as in the month of August 1870, when he left Berlin for the campaign in France. In this connection we may note the profession of his religious faith which he made one evening at Versailles to the guests at his table :

"I do not understand how one can live in a well-regulated society and fulfil one's duties to oneself and to others, without the belief in a revealed religion, a God whose will is for good, a supreme judge, and a future life. If I were not a firmly convinced Christian, if I did not possess the admirable support of religion, I should never have been the Chancellor you know."

During his stay at Schönhausen, country neighbours had introduced Bismarck to the Puttkammer family, who were extremely pious. He had at once noticed the daughter of the house, Jeanne, nine years his junior, and he asked her hand. The father, according to his own expression, "felt as if his head had been struck with an axe." Axe or not, the young people were agreed, and the marriage, to the satisfaction of every one, took place in July 1847. It was a very united and happy household, and there were three children, one girl, Marie, who became Countess Rantzau, and two sons, Herbert and William.

The year of Bismarck's marriage was also that of his début in political life. He was then thirty-two years old.

Prussia, as it had been re-established after the treaties of 1815, had all the characteristics of an autocratic and feudal State. Nevertheless, Friedrich-Wilhelm III had consented in 1825 to institute provincial Assemblies in each of the eight provinces of the monarchy ; but nothing could have been less liberal than these institutions. The landed interest alone was represented in them, and that under quite special conditions ; each Assembly was isolated, with no communication with the others ; it had the right of discussion, it could express its wishes, but its power ended there. In a word, it could in no wise compare with the parliamentary functions at that time in use in England and France.

At the
United Diet
of 1847

Bismarck

The new King, Friedrich-Wilhelm IV, who began his reign in 1840, could not be suspected of giving in to new views ; but, anyhow, he understood that it might be opportune to make some concession to liberal ideas. The concession was moderate ; it consisted in uniting, under any conditions he might think proper, the eight Provincial Assemblies in a single Diet, called the United Diet. This plenary assembly possessed no more efficacious powers ; its setting was a little more solemn, but it was nothing more than a setting.

The first of these Diets was held at Berlin in 1847. At the opening sitting, on the 1st of April, Friedrich-Wilhelm made a declaration to the Deputies which had nothing equivocal about it.

“The inheritor of a crown which I received intact, and that I ought to and will leave intact to my successors, never will I transform the natural relation between Prince and people into a constitutional compact ; never will I admit that a written sheet (here is already the scrap of paper dear to Bethmann-Hollweg) may, like a second Providence, interpose between our God and this country, to govern us with its paragraphs and by them replace the holy and ancient fidelity.”

It was at this United Diet of 1847 that Bismarck made his début in politics in consequence of accidental circumstances. Some months earlier he had been elected in the landed interests assistant member to the Landtag in the Province of Saxony. He was not intended to sit at Berlin ; but the ill-

ness of the Chief Deputy left a vacant place, and Bismarck had to fill it.

Concerning this period of his life Bismarck wrote, in his "Thoughts and Memories," that he was not imbued with the prejudices of his caste, and had never thought that the ancient royal power of Prussia ought to be restored with its absolute authority. Still, it would have been difficult to find a more convinced champion of conservative and reactionary royalty than he.

It is always interesting to know the political début of a man who later on was one of the foremost personages of his time.

Bismarck spoke his first words at the sitting on the 17th of May, 1847. An orator on the left had just recalled the rising of Prussia in 1815; he had declared that Prussia had fought then to gain a constitution. "A noble people," he said, "an enlightened people like the Prussians, knows no national hatred."

The assertion was singularly audacious, and the whole history of Prussia gives it the lie. Patriotisms founded on generous sentiments, and not exclusive of sympathy with other peoples, are known; Prussian patriotism has never been nourished but by jealousies and hatreds.

Bismarck himself was the man of national hatred; he never concealed it. He protested energetically against the words of his colleague of the left.

"As if the popular movement of 1815," he exclaimed, "ought to be attributed to other causes,

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or that any other motive was needed, than shame at seeing the foreigner ruling in our country. In my opinion, it would be to render a bad service to the national honour if one allowed that the oppression and humiliation the Prussians had to endure at the hands of a foreign ruler were not enough to make the blood boil in their veins and to stifle every sentiment under hatred of the foreigner."

To-day these sentiments would evoke enthusiastic acclamations in the Prussian Chambers ; then they let loose a tempest.

Bismarck was not greatly moved. He took up a newspaper lying on the platform and began to read it quietly ; when the storm abated, he finished his speech.

From the first he had not posed as an orator, which he would never be ; his style would always be too rough and abrupt. He had set up as a man who frankly spoke out all he thought, not caring in the least to please or flatter, a man with whom his adversaries would be obliged to reckon.

The first united *Landtag* separated at the end of two months and a half without having done anything striking. Bismarck, who had just been married, made his wedding-journey in the land "where the orange-tree blossoms." At Venice he met King Friedrich-Wilhelm, who sent him an invitation to dinner and lavished attentions on him. He was enchanted with them ; it was, in fact, the proof that his political attitude at the Diet had had his sovereign's full approbation.

Events soon took a tragic turning. The revolution of the 24th of February, 1848, which had overthrown Louis-Philippe and proclaimed the Republic, had its repercussion almost all over Germany. Bismarck's first move was to get his arms ready, as officer in the *Landwehr*, to "march upon the Rhine," as he wrote to his brother on the 1st of March. But the danger was not on the frontiers; it did not come from France; it was in the very capital of the Prussian monarchy.

Days of
March 1848
at Berlin

For several days already Berlin had been the scene of lively agitation in the streets, when on the 14th of March the first barricades were set up. The Government remained undecided; the evil grew. On the 18th of March the revolution was in full swing; there was a regular battle in the streets, which were strewn with dead and wounded. General von Prittwitz posted fourteen thousand men and thirty-six guns at the approaches of the Castle, the King's residence; but Friedrich-Wilhelm seemed terrified at the scenes of massacre whose echoes reached him, and gave orders to the troops to retire. Revolution was mistress of the capital; the insurgents, carrying corpses, surrounded the royal palace, calling loudly for the King. The unhappy man came down; passing in front of more than two hundred litters, he bowed down before the dead; and, himself wearing the cockade of the insurrection, he took part in the procession through the streets of Berlin.

Bismarck was at Schönhausen when he heard

Bismarck

of these events. He had the black and white flag, the flag of Prussia, symbol of loyalty, hoisted on the belfry ; he had arms taken from the peasants.

One only among his neighbours wished to act for the insurgents at Berlin. Unmoved, Bismarck said to him : “ You know me, you know I am a peaceable man ; but if you do that I fire upon you.” “ You will not do that,” replied the other. “ I give you my word of honour that I will, and you know I am a man of my word. So keep quiet.”

He rushes to Potsdam, sees a former Minister—Bodenschwurgh ; talks to him of the King. “ Oh ! that mountebank ! ” replies the old Minister. But Bismarck is convinced that the King is not a free agent ; he makes numerous attempts to gain access to him, but is unsuccessful.

Arrived in Berlin, where, since the part he took in the United Diet, he is known to many, he takes precautions to put the curious off the scent. He has his cheeks shaved, keeping a long tuft on his chin ; he wears a broad-brimmed hat ornamented with the tricolour cockade—black, red, and yellow, the cockade of the German party. With his great height, his hat, his tuft, and his dress-coat—for he reckoned on being received by the King—he looked odd enough. A street urchin shouted at him, “ Look ! there’s a Frenchman ! ” That urchin had not been often in Paris.

As for Bismarck, he thought of nothing but a severe repression ; he went to see the generals in order to induce them to act. He could obtain

nothing ; had not the King himself disclaimed any resistance ?

Some days later he was at the reception of the Officers of the Guard in the Marble Hall, and listened with amazement to these words of the King :

“ I have never been more free and safe than under the protection of the citizens of Berlin.”

“ Murmurs and the clank of swords were heard,” Bismarck reports, “ such as a King of Prussia had never before heard amidst his officers, and will never again hear ; so, at least, I hope. I went back to Schönhausen broken-hearted.”

A second United Diet opened on the 2nd of April, less than a fortnight after the days of March, and again Bismarck sat in it as a substitute deputy ; it will be supposed that he was set on having his indignant protest heard there. The majority proposed a resolution that resembled approbation of the past ; he took up the word :

“ What decides me to vote against the address is the expressions of joy and gratitude with regard to recent events. The past is buried, and, more bitterly than many among you, I regret that no human power is able to resuscitate it, the Crown itself having cast the earth upon its coffin. But if I accept the fact, constrained by force of circumstances, I cannot break with my actions and words at the United *Landtag* by a lie, by feigning to be grateful and joyful about that which in my eyes is, at the very least, a false issue.”

So strong was his indignation, it appears, that tears came into his eyes and interrupted his speech.

Bismarck

Before separating, the Diet voted for a project of electoral law, with two grades of electors and no franchise conditions; to Bismarck this liberal measure was a further misfortune, and he described it as "the Jena of the Prussian nobility."

Despite the gravity of the days of March and their consequences, the interest of German history at this time was much less at Berlin than at Frankfort-on-Main.

On the 18th of May, 1848, in the ancient church of St. Paul, a Germanic Parliament, elected by universal suffrage, had been opened; it had for its object the substitution of the unity of Germany for the system of Germanic Confederation which dated from the treaties of 1815.

Composed mainly of professors, the Parliament of Frankfort listened to the discussion of numerous political theories, but did little other business. At Schönhausen, Bismarck followed these debates with but little sympathy. Some months earlier, in connection with the Polish riots that had taken place in Posen, he had written that "the first impulse of unity and German strength ought to be to wrest Alsace from France and set up the German flag on the Cathedral of Strasburg."

Therefore all the discussions of the parliamentarians of St. Paul's Church seemed to him idle, if not dangerous; if the unity of Germany ever came to pass, it ought not to be through a more or less revolutionary thrust from below, but through political action from above for the benefit of one country,

Prussia, and that of one dynasty, the Hohenzollerns.

In fact, the man who did create the unity of Germany was, and always remained, profoundly Prussian; Prussian to his very marrow.

After six months of discussion, the Frankfort Parliament had finished by voting for the establishment of a German Empire and for offering the crown of this Empire to the King of Prussia. In answer, Friedrich-Wilhelm had refused; he could not, he said, "accept any crown but that which bore stamp of the seal of God."

In replying to the delegates from Frankfort, he entrenched himself behind "the free concurrence of the crowned heads, the Princes, and the Free Towns of Germany," which for him was the necessary condition of this transformation. Ten days later, the 13th of April, 1849, Bismarck, who had been elected Deputy in the new Prussian Chamber, the outcome of the Constitution of December 1848, made this spirited declaration from the tribune:

"It is best that Prussia should remain Prussia; as such, she will always be able to give laws to Germany, instead of receiving from it such or such others. Gentlemen, as a Deputy I have the honour of representing the ancient electoral capital, the city of Brandenburg, which has given its name to this Province, the birthplace and cradle of the Prussian monarchy; I feel myself all the more obliged to oppose the discussion of a motion which tends to undermine and overthrow the State Edifice built by centuries of glory and patriotism.

Bismarck

The crown of Frankfort may be very brilliant, but the gold which would give it true brilliancy could be obtained only by melting the Prussian crown, and I believe not at all in the success of a recasting in the mould of this Constitution."

One of his opponents, Baron von Vincke, spoke of his "antediluvian ideas" as shown by this speech, but he continued to declare himself the champion of reaction. Here is the conclusion of a lengthy speech on the 6th of September, 1849:

"We are Prussians, and will remain Prussians. . . . And I hope that, with God's help, we shall still be Prussians when this piece of paper (the Frankfort Constitution) will long have fallen into forgetfulness like a dead leaf of autumn."

He always preferred the strong hand. The revolution had broken out in the Palatinate. The Bavarian troops were untrustworthy; the only thing he wished for was their open revolt; "for then," as he said to the Bavarian Minister, "the ulcer will be cured at once. If, on the contrary, you come to terms with the hesitating troops, the ulcer will spread inwardly. The more squarely you deal with it the better."

Bismarck was the sort of fellow with whom it was not well to have a dispute. One day in a Berlin restaurant he heard a drinker speak lightly of the Royal Family.

"Out you go!" said he. "If you're not gone when I've emptied this glass, I'll break it on your head."

Which he did; then addressing the waiter, he

said quietly : " Waiter, how much for the broken glass ? "

One day, at Sans-Souci, he spoke very harshly to the King, accusing him without circumlocution of having evacuated Berlin after the days of March and of having inoculated his people with revolution through the mouthpiece of the royal authority. " I no longer believe in the help or the support of the King," he said.

Parliamentary verbosity was hateful to him. On leaving a sitting of the Chamber on the 28th of August, 1849, he wrote to his wife :

" Our eternal repetitions and decisions are worth no more than the moonlight contemplation of a sentimental young man building castles in the air."

He had no wish to imitate the French form of government ; in the Chamber he said : " The example of France is not very attractive, and truly in the present situation [in 1849] I see nothing to persuade us to clothe our healthy and vigorous body in the Nessus shirt of the French political theorists. . . . French equality is the visionary daughter of the envy and covetousness which, for the last sixty years, that richly dowered nation has pursued through blood and aberration without being able to reach it."

Friedrich-Wilhelm was aware of the worth of this rough giver of advice, who spoke his mind on everyone and everything. There had been at one time some question of putting him in the Ministry ; the King struck off his name, and wrote in the margin of the paper : " Could not be made

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Minister unless the bayonet is to be absolute master."

While waiting for the forming of a vigorous Ministry he might be employed in diplomacy: he was sent to the Diet of Frankfort.

In spite of the blow which had shaken all feudal Germany to its depths in 1848, the régime of 1815 was being restored. After having refused the Imperial Crown, Friedrich-Wilhelm had the singular idea of resuming the work of the Parliament of Frankfort, and had brought together, in 1850, a Parliament at Erfurt with the mission of examining a new project for the organization of Germany, to be called The Limited Union.

This Parliament lived hardly a month, and Bismarck, who had been a member of it, did not regret it. As Austria had just overcome the revolution in Hungary and Italy, she undertook to re-establish in Germany the system of 1815, which was all to her profit.

Schwarzenberg, Francis-Joseph's Minister, had, with Manteuffel, Friedrich-Wilhelm's Minister, an interview at Olmütz, soon followed by conferences at Dresden. The result of these negotiations was that the old Diet of Frankfort was revived, as in the past.

At the time of the Olmütz interview it could have been thought for a moment that war between Austria and Prussia was imminent; for Schwarzenberg, whose principle was, "first to discredit Prussia and then to demolish her," had sent a

threatening note to Berlin, and Friedrich-Wilhelm had given way. One whole party in the Prussian Chamber were saying that the honour of Prussia was compromised ; there was talk of the "humiliation" of Olmütz, the "retreat" of Olmütz.

Bismarck, who was one day to tear up the Federal agreement and turn Austria out of Germany's doors, made a long speech in approval of what had happened ; his feudal sympathies seeing for the moment but one thing—the defeat of democracy.

"Prussian honour, in my opinion," he said, "does not consist in Prussia playing the part of Don Quixote in Germany. . . . For my part, I hold that Prussian honour must above all things preserve itself from all ignominious contact with democracy, and that everything Prussia and Austria, after a free examination made in common, shall have judged wise and politic shall be executed in concert by these two protective Powers of Germany, having parity of rights in this regard. . . . A war against Austria could be only a war of propaganda and revolutionary principles."

Thus spoke Bismarck in 1850 ; it did not take many months to change his language. What would never find change in him was the definition he gave in the same speech :

"The only wholesome and salutary foundation for a great State is political egotism, and not a taste for the romantic."

It is certain that a "taste for the romantic" was never to be an element in the temper of the Iron Chancellor.

Bismarck

At the Diet of Frankfort Prussia was represented by General von Rochow. Two Councillors of Legation were to be his colleagues ;
At the Diet of Frankfort Bismarck was one of these. The King, undecided in anything, could not prevent himself from saying, " You are very courageous to undertake, without preparation, duties with which you are not familiar."

" It is your Majesty that shows courage in entrusting this post to me," replied Bismarck ; " and, after all, your Majesty is in no wise obliged to sustain my nomination any moment when you ascertain that you have nominated a man who is incapable of fulfilling the duties. As for me, I cannot know if the task is above my capacity before I have set to work at it."

" We will make a trial of it," answered the King.

Bismarck had made up his mind to renounce the dream he had written of to his wife about this time.

" I have a constant fancy which pursues me everywhere : it is to sit in a bare, deep valley, in summer heat, my head on your knee, and to gaze at the blue sky and the green tops of the trees through the smoke of my cigar, with you looking at me, and to do absolutely nothing. When will that be ? "

Bismarck's nomination to the Diet was signed on the 6th of May, 1851 ; it was the beginning of the political career which was going to make him President of the Council of Prussian Ministers and Chancellor of the German Empire.

His life as a statesman was to last thirty-nine years.

The Federal Diet of Frankfort was resuming the course of its sittings, which had been interrupted by the events of 1848.

At this precise moment, as in the past, it comprised thirty-nine Sovereign States ; the Delegates of these States alone, without any collaboration with the Deputies elected by the Provinces, formed the Assembly. As in the past, it was put under the presidency of Austria, and the vice-presidency of Prussia. As in the past, the machinery of its deliberations was made up of complicated and creaking wheels within wheels, with their old ring of scrap-iron. Appearances remained the same, the only thing changed was the air it now breathed on the banks of the Main.

For three years Friedrich-Wilhelm had maintained an ambiguous attitude, in harmony with his character, but one which had, in spite of everything, revealed the latent antagonism between Prussia and Austria ; he had refused the Imperial Crown offered him, and then he had endeavoured to effect a grouping of the States of Northern Germany. Austria had not dissembled her ill-temper, and Prussia, humiliated by the "backing-out" of Olmütz, had consented to the restoration of the old federal law. But she had done it under the pressure of a threat, and the victory of her rival had left a painful impression. Far from weakening, these feelings of jealousy and revenge were challenged to take a more violent form from the moment

Bismarck

when the representative of Prussia was, like Bismarck, a fundamentally Prussian Prussian.

When Bismarck arrived at Frankfort he was thirty-six; at that age, and, as we know, of far from patient disposition, he was not the man to conceal the irritation the pretended superiority of Austria caused. He had begun by getting rid of his official chief; on the 15th of July, hardly two months after his arrival, he himself was appointed Chief Ambassador. Then, on every subject, whether on serious matters or on futile, he skirmished with the representative of Austria so constantly that at last this representative (who was then Count Rechberg) proposed to settle their quarrel pistol in hand; but Bismarck, quite unmoved, gave him to understand that diplomatic affairs were not to be treated according to the rules of duelling.

Then there was the famous incident of the cigar which Bismarck loved to relate. At the Diet, the representative of Austria, President of the Assembly, alone had the privilege or the habit of smoking. One day Bismarck, who was a great smoker, took a cigar from his pocket and quietly asked the President, Count Buol, for a light. Greatly astonished, Buol complied; the amazed onlookers looked for a great diplomatic incident. The news was telegraphed to Berlin; it was soon an official event—two great Powers, Austria and Prussia, were smoking at the Diet. In six months' time, Bavaria took to lighting his cigar, then Saxony, then Würtemberg, and soon all the other States followed

Years of Preparation

suit, except Hesse-Darmstadt, who thought himself too small a boy. Austria had lost its monopoly in the matter of tobacco and was on the way to lose more.

Bismarck spent nearly eight years in the Diet of Frankfort. He had gained a perfect knowledge of the field into which flowed the internal and external statecraft of the Germanic Body. It was, he said, a run of foxes, every outlet of which he knew, down to the vent-holes. Heine's epigram on the Germanic Confederation always came in aptly: "*O Bund, Du Hund, Du bist nicht gesund*" (Confederation, thou dog, thou art not healthy !)

The very complicated mutual relations of the German States; the question of a Zollverein; affairs in the East which ended in the Crimean War and the Congress of Paris,—what a field for observation and intrigue for a man who meant to keep himself informed of everything, and whose ruling passion was the supremacy of Prussia and her dynasty !

At Frankfort this official diplomat conceived the liveliest contempt for diplomacy—for bureaucratic diplomacy, that is—which confines itself to the blackening of paper without any accompanying energetic action. He wrote to his wife :

"Frankfort is horribly boring. Picture to yourself a perpetual malicious espionage. . . . Send me X. the cobbler, or M. from —, and if they were well washed and combed, I'd make diplomats of them. In this case, I am making rapid progress in the art of talking much and saying nothing. . . .

Bismarck

Each one of us fancies and believes the same of the others, that he is full of ideas and projects, . . . and yet the lot of us all together haven't a hair's-breadth of knowledge as to what Germany will become, any more than we could tell what kind of weather there will be next summer. No one, not even the most malevolent democrat, has any idea of the incapacity and charlatanism of this diplomacy."

At Frankfort another idea was making rapid growth in Bismarck's mind, until it completely absorbed it. It will be remembered that he had supported the Olmütz Convention and had been a partisan of the Alliance between Prussia and Austria ; and here now is Austria, seen at work in the Presidency of the Diet, speedily inspiring him with feelings of aversion, or rather hatred. Day by day his Prussian patriotism grows greater and more bitter ; there is no room in Germany for two equal Powers—one must supplant the other.

He writes to the Minister Manteuffel, his chief : " For me the interest of Prussia is the only essential consideration that ought to weigh in our policy."

He was convinced that the dual system upon which the Confederation of 1815 rested was an ambiguous tie which could neither last nor be peacefully loosened ; it was a Gordian Knot which the sword alone could cut.

Shortly after leaving Frankfort, when he was Ambassador at Petersburg, in writing to Herr von Schleinitz, Prussian Minister of Foreign Affairs, he made use of these prophetic words :

"In our federal position I see a defect from which Prussia is suffering, and which, sooner or later, will have to be extirpated *ferro et igne*, if it is not remedied while there is still time."

That was written on the 12th of May, 1859, that is to say—note it well—seven years before Sadowa.

About the same date he wrote again: "Up to now, the Confederation has been to Prussia a weight and a rope round our neck—a rope the end of which is in enemy hands which are waiting only for an opportunity to tighten it." And he was not inclined to allow either himself or his country to be strangled.

When writing his "Thoughts and Memories," much later on, he recalled how he had suffered under that state of affairs at the time:

"Well, as for me, in so far as I represented Prussian policy, I could not help feeling ashamed and exasperated when I saw that we were renouncing all personal ideas and policy as soon as Austria formulated its demands, in a fashion which was not always of the most polite kind. . . . The King shared my impressions more or less, but he had no desire to react by adopting a more far-sighted policy."

Bismarck did not spend the eight years of his Embassy continuously in Frankfort; he went frequently to Berlin, where the King liked to consult him on current affairs; whence arose the strong displeasure of the President of the Council, Manteuffel, who was jealous of the favour shown him and saw in him an approaching successor. The King

Bismarck

depended on Bismarck's managing "the scabby sheep of the Right, and the noisome goats of the Left"; but he did not always follow his advice.

At Berlin Bismarck had also frequent interviews with the brother of the King, the future Wilhelm I, and especially endeavoured to convince him that Prussia, on the Eastern Question, had absolutely no reason for making war on Russia.

Near Frankfort he went at times to visit the old Prince Metternich in his mansion at Johannisburg on the bank of the Rhine; he had won his confidence by making him relate the events of his lengthy career.

"From time to time," he said, "I struck the bell to make it go on sounding. . . ." And the ancient Chancellor told his little stories.

Twice, while he was Ambassador at Frankfort, Bismarck travelled abroad. In 1852 he was sent to Vienna; there was a question of forming a Customs and Commercial agreement with Austria. The letter in which his master accredited him to the Emperor Francis-Joseph said of him that he was "honoured by some and hated by others because of his chivalrous loyalty and his irreconcilable opposition to revolution in whatever form. He is my friend and loyal servant."

The special mission with which he was charged had no result at the time, but this journey at least allowed him to visit part of Hungary—whence he wrote very picturesque letters to his wife—and,

**Journeys to
Vienna and
Paris**

above all, to see the Emperor and the Austrian statesmen at close quarters.

He came to the conclusion that Austria did not possess the strength that the success of Olmütz might have made one suppose; the success had been the personal work of a highly energetic Minister, Schwarzenberg, who had died in April 1852. Those who had replaced him, Bach, Buol, Bruck—the monosyllabic Ministry—were not strong enough to play the same game.

Bismarck returned to Berlin with a mass of information about men and things in Austria, which enabled him to be hopeful as to his personal plans. More and more convinced, the longer he exercised his functions at Frankfort, that a collision between his country and Austria must occur sooner or later, he could face the future pretty confidently.

In 1855 an invitation from Count Hatzfeld, the Prussian Ambassador to France, called Bismarck to Paris. It was the year of the *Exposition Universelle* at the *Palais de l'Industrie*; the siege of Sevastopol was nearly at its end. Under these circumstances he saw Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in Paris; he was presented to Napoleon III, and was present at a fête at Versailles, the arrangements at which seemed to him defective. "The days were long past," he said with his Teutonic fatuity, "when one could take lessons in politeness and good breeding from France and at the Court of Paris."

The Emperor, whom he saw several times, spoke to him of the establishment of a close agreement

Bismarck

between France and Prussia. "These two neighbouring States, placed at the head of civilisation by their intellectual culture and their institutions, owed each other a mutual support."

Such was, it seems, Napoleon's opinion. Bismarck relates it without comment ; but from that moment he had looked upon the Emperor as "stupid and sentimental ; walking in the midst of the most fantastic ideas."

Two years later the future Chancellor again saw Napoleon, when he again went to Paris in order to discuss the settlement of the Neuchâtel question. The Emperor talked with him of various projects, always coming back to his idea of a Franco-Prussian Alliance.

As for him, he listened and found a more and more justifiable opinion of this vacillating and dreamy sovereign :

"It seems to me," he said at that time to the King of Prussia, "that the Emperor is an intelligent and amiable man, though he is not so clever as they like to say ; whatever happens is put down to him, and if it rains unseasonably in Eastern Asia, they attribute the cause to some perfidious machination of the Emperor."

Bismarck expressed himself in this fashion, a short time after the Congress of Paris, where the Government of Napoleon III had been the arbitrator of European peace.

He held that there was an overrated opinion of the Emperor of the French which did not deceive himself.

From Paris, as from Vienna, he brought back

personal views which allowed him to have confidence in the future.

In the month of October 1857, King Friedrich-Wilhelm, who was showing signs of physical and mental weakening, gave over the administration of the Kingdom to his brother for three months. A year later, in October 1858, his bad state of health obliged him to do still more: he entrusted the Regency to his brother. He was brought to sign his own abdication, which preceded his death by about two and a half years.

This dynastic change had interesting consequences on Bismarck's career. His first relations with the Crown Prince, the future Wilhelm I, went back to 1835, when he himself was only twenty. After the days of March, when the Prince was returning from England, where he had been making a short stay, Bismarck had read to him a poem of the day which was circulating in the army and gave expression to the anger of the soldiers at the time of the evacuation of Berlin, which had been forced upon them.:

“Black, red, and gold, their flag shines in the sun,
The Black Eagle falls, sullied, from the staff.
Here ends, O Zollern, thy glorious story.
Here fell a king, but not in battle.
No longer do we turn our eyes
To the fallen star.
What thus thou didst, Prince, thou wilt repent.
Not one will be faithful as were the Prussians.”

The Prince had been unable to restrain his tears at this humiliating memory. Since then, the two

Bismarck

men had had fairly frequent interviews ; Bismarck was aware of the far from favourable sentiments of the Princess of Prussia, the future Empress Augusta, respecting him ; but the Prince's confidence in him was not disturbed by this fact.

He soon received a proof of it, in an unexpected way. In January 1859 the Regent informed him that he intended to appoint him to the Embassy at Petersburg.

Bismarck could not forbear setting forth the objections ; he was now thoroughly at home on the Frankfort ground, having worked it for eight years. To take him away from Frankfort, would it not be to lose the benefit of the position he had gained there ?

" I cannot understand," replied the Regent, " why you take the thing so tragically. St. Petersburg has always been considered the highest post of Prussian diplomacy, and you ought to accept your nomination as an evidence of my great confidence."

Bismarck could but bow to the decision. His nomination was signed the 29th of January, 1859.

In the Regent's mind the Embassy of Petersburg was but an appointment preparatory to higher office ; no doubt he was thinking of giving, after a short delay, the Presidency of the Council to a man whose great mental qualities and exclusive devotion to the Prussian Cause he appreciated. He himself was jealous enough of his authority. One day, when he was talking freely with Bismarck of his colleagues, he had said :

" Do you, by chance, take me for a nincompoop ?

I shall be my own Minister of Foreign Affairs and my own Minister of War ; those are matters I understand."

Nevertheless, he felt that the general policy of the realm ought to be directed by a man who had given the country serious reasons for confidence in him.

Why should not Bismarck be that man ? When he sat in the Legislative Assemblies he had always stood up as an energetic opponent of revolution in all its forms. At Frankfort he had gained special mastery of diplomatic questions ; a great Embassy would put the finishing-touch on his authority, and then he could return to Berlin to receive the Presidency of the Council.

So Bismarck, in March 1859, went to represent the Government of Friedrich-Wilhelm IV, or rather of the Regent, Prince Wilhelm, at the Court of Alexander II.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST PASSAGE OF ARMS

Ambassador in Russia—Relations with Roon—A programme of foreign policy—Accession of Wilhelm I—Ambassador to Paris—President of the Council and Minister of Foreign Affairs—Conflicts with the Chamber of Deputies—"Might goes before Right"—Insurrection of Russian Poland—Danish War—Convention of Gastein—Count Bismarck—Journey to Biarritz.

WHEN Bismarck left Berlin to take up his post as Ambassador in Russia, he had to make a long stage of the journey in a post-chaise under very uncomfortable conditions, for at that time there was no connection between the Prussian and Russian railways. From Königsburg to Pskow, more than six hundred kilometres, Bismarck's carriage rumbled along without a stop for ninety-six hours—four days and four nights. This fashion of travelling in snow and cold which in the night went down to twelve degrees, left him with disagreeable memories. "Russia," he wrote, "grew longer under our wheels; the *versts* brought forth young at each halt."

The inside of the coach was too low for his great height; he had to make the journey on the outside seat, which was open in front, and he suffered so greatly from the cold that the skin of his face peeled off. But these discomforts were speedily forgotten in the warm welcome he received at Petersburg.

The First Passage of Arms

It was then the third year after the Crimean War. Gortschakoff, who had taken the direction of Foreign Policy, opined that it was best to keep Russia in peaceful seclusion after this severe shaking—a gentle fillip in comparison with the actual cataclysm—she needed to retire into herself for some time. As to the Tsar Alexander II, his predominant sentiment at that moment was animosity against Austria, which Power, according to the common saying, had just astonished Russia and the world by its ingratitude, for had it not, in fact, refused to support the Empire of the Tsars in the Crimean War, though it owed the suppression of the Hungarian insurrection of 1849 to the intervention of Russia ?

In consequence, grounds for agreement were speedily discovered between the Emperor and the former Ambassador to the Diet, who had brought back from Frankfort distinctly anti-Austrian sentiments.

Bismarck found, too, a very favourable welcome from the Dowager Empress, the daughter of Friedrich-Wilhelm III and widow of Nicolas I. Of her he said to his wife : “ She is of an amiable temperament, and treats me with almost maternal kindness. I talk with her as if I had known her from childhood.”

The character of these personal relations, not to speak of his perfect knowledge of the Russian language, contributed towards at once giving the Prussian Ambassador a very strong position.

The first year of Bismarck's Embassy was

marked by a European event of the first importance.

France had entered into an alliance with the Kingdom of Sardinia ; Napoleon and Victor Emmanuel had combined their armies for the liberation of Northern Italy from the Austrian rule.

Public opinion in Prussia did not conceal its uneasiness. What was the meaning of this intervention of France ? It was the breaking, at short notice, of the treaties of 1815, on which was founded the public law of Europe ; a new Napoleon was again making himself the instrument of a policy that was a menace to Europe. The Regent gave way before the displeasure of those around him. After the Battle of Magenta, which had decided the fate of Lombardy, he had ordered the mobilization of six army corps—about eighty thousand men. After the Battle of Solferino, when the French reached the entrance to Venetia, the military preparations of Prussia were pushed on furiously ; the papers were already anticipating a victory on the Rhine and the annexation of Alsace ; so the Armistice of Villafranca, on the 11th of July, caused deep disappointment in Prussia. It had been believed that the blow was to have been struck at the hereditary enemy which had been impossible in 1840 ; once again the sword must be left in the scabbard.

At this time Bismarck did not share this warlike temper, for he was not inclined to play Austria's game in any fashion. On the 8th of May, 1859, he wrote to his brother : " If we help Austria to

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victory we shall assure her a position in Italy and Germany such as she has never had since the decree of restitution during the Thirty Years' War, and it will need a Gustavus Adolphus or a Frederick II to emancipate us afresh. We are not rich enough to use our strength in wars that bring us in nothing."

Military success seemed to him at the best doubtful.

"If luck goes against us," he wrote on the 21st of July, 1859, to one of his friends at Frankfort, "we shall see the Federal States give us the slip and forsake us like the blighted fruit the wind shakes from the tree. Those amongst them whose capitals have been garrisoned by the French will make all haste to save themselves patriotically on the raft of a new Confederation of the Rhine."

So the enforced inaction to which Prussia saw herself reduced was in perfect harmony with his point of view.

Bismarck fell seriously ill during his stay at Petersburg. By way of encouragement, a friend kindly told him that the representatives of Prussia either died or went mad. He saw himself on the verge of typhus or idiotcy; but his strong constitution and a treatment of Madeira enabled him to get the upper hand again.

At Berlin he had left friends who relied on him for the execution of certain political plans. Among the greatest of these friends was Albert von Roon, who had for long enjoyed a great reputation in military science; in December 1859 the Regent had shrewdly called

Relations
with Roon

Bismarck

him to the Ministry of War. He was to keep this important office till the end of 1875, that is to say, continuously for fourteen years—a thing which is of interest in countries where ministerial instability is, as it were, a principle of political life.

Bismarck and Roon had been acquainted since 1835, when one was twenty and the other thirty-two; they had become more and more intimate, as if they had guessed that one day they would need each other for the realisation of great plans.

For the moment Roon had decided to undertake the reorganization of the Army. As the attempt at mobilization in the summer of 1859 had been but moderately successful, he considered that it was necessary to remodel its rules. He foresaw lively opposition in the Prussian Second Chamber; he was, in consequence, anxious to have at Berlin a fellow-fighter in the Ambassador at Petersburg, whose great energy he well knew; and he therefore exerted himself to get his friend into the Ministry.

The head of the Military Cabinet of the Regent, Edwin von Manteuffel, the future General of 1866 and 1870, gave his support to the same candidate, and both begged the portfolio of Foreign Affairs for Bismarck.

The Regent took the course of asking the Ambassador, when on a visit to Berlin, to state before him and some of his Ministers the programme he proposed to follow.

“The feeblest side of our policy,” said Bismarck,

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is our meekness towards Austria, who has domineered over us since Olmütz. . . . If, **A Programme of Foreign Policy** in agreement with Austria, we could settle the question of our influence in Germany, that would be all the better ; but that agreement will be possible only when, at Vienna, they are convinced that in a contrary case we shall not shrink from rupture and war." It was important to preserve good relations with Russia, for they were valuable to Prussian policy.

Schleinitz, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, spoke in his turn ; according to him, the real dangers which threatened Prussia came from the West, from Paris and nowhere else. He recalled finally the will of Friedrich-Wilhelm III, vanquished at Jena and Tilsit, victor at Leipzig and Waterloo. The Regent, son of Queen Louisa, was touched by these paternal traditions ; he allowed Bismarck to return to Petersburg.

Perhaps Bismarck was not altogether sorry ; he wrote to his sister on the 15th of July, 1860 :

" I'm like an old pensioner that has renounced the things of this world, or an old soldier, formerly ambitious, who has reached the goal of a good command, and I feel as if I might here wait the ending of my days through many long years of contentment."

And again he wrote, on the 14th of March, 1861 :
" I don't find the winter so bad as I thought, and I don't ask for any change in my circumstances until, please God, I may go and take my rest at

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Schönhausen or Reinfeld and have my coffin made there in leisurely fashion."

Meanwhile the sad existence of Friedrich-Wilhelm IV had come to an end on the 2nd of

January, 1861; his brother, the Regent, inaugurated his personal reign at the age of sixty-four under the title of Wilhelm I.

He had himself crowned, with extraordinary solemnity, at Königsberg, the capital of the first King of Prussia. Bismarck had assisted at the ceremony and then gone back to his post. His stay in Russia had but increased the inimical feelings which, in his character of good Prussian, he bore towards everything Polish.

"Every success of the national movement in Poland," he wrote, "is a defeat for Prussia; we can fight this element according to the rules, not of the people's rights, but of those of war. We must look upon Polish sympathies not with humanity, but as an adversary; between us and the restoration of Poland there is no peace possible."

This was, for him, yet another reason for maintaining good relations with Petersburg, whose hostility to Poland was also a principle of the Government.

How Bismarck and Prussia kept faithful to this Polish hatred, one knows; one knows but too well; but how Polish patriotism has succeeded, in despite of every persecution, in maintaining its national traditions and its unquenchable hope of happier days we know, too, and shall know still better when the present war finds its righteous end.

The First Passage of Arms

In May 1862 Bismarck was recalled from Petersburg, and, a few days later, he was appointed Ambassador to Paris. Before this nomination gave prominence to it, in the best-informed circles in Prussia Bismarck was already looked upon as a man with a great future. A general officer who, as a sub-lieutenant, had joined the *École d'Application* at Metz in 1861, told us that he had heard Bismarck spoken of under the following circumstances in the month of February 1862.

The officers of the *École d'Application*, during the winter of every year, gave a subscription Charity Ball, at which the German officers of the neighbouring garrisons, Saarbruck and Saarlouis, were present. The Frenchmen received them at their table and talked with them as comrades. One of these foreign officers, the son of a Prussian Minister, had a lengthy and serious conversation with our sub-lieutenant. He spoke to him of a man who was beginning to rise, and seemed destined for great eminence; he was called Bismarck—a name to remember; and in a confidential vein this officer added: “Why should not France make use of Bismarck’s influence to contract an alliance with Prussia against their common enemy, Austria?”

The story is characteristic by its date; it proves that the future Chancellor of the German Empire, as early as the year 1862, was already regarded by his own set as a personage on whom to keep one’s eye.

Bismarck

The Embassy to Paris was, so to speak, a first stage on the way to the Ministry which Wilhelm I had arranged for Bismarck.

Bismarck only passed through Berlin. On the 25th of May, 1862, he wrote to his wife :

“ How long shall I stay there [at Paris] ? Who knows ? Perhaps some months ; perhaps some weeks only. Here every one is conspiring to keep me in Berlin, and I shall hold myself lucky on the day when I find at last, on the banks of the Seine, a spot where I can be quiet and a porter who won't let any one come near me.”

But, once settled in the ancient mansion of Prince Eugène, in the Rue de Lille, from the point of view of comfort, all did not appear perfect.

“ The house,” he writes to his sister, on the 16th of June, 1862, “ is very well situated, but it is dark, damp, and cold. Its whole aspect is north, and there's a smell of mould and drains. . . . Hatzfeld and Pourtalès lived here all the time ; but they died of it in the flower of their age, and if I remain in this house, I, too, shall die sooner than I wish.”

On the 1st of June, 1862, Bismarck was received officially at the Tuileries in order to deliver his credentials to Napoleon III.

“ He received me in a friendly manner ; he is good-looking, has become a little stouter, but has not grown fat or aged. . . . The Empress is still one of the most beautiful women I know ; in spite of St. Petersburg, she has in fact become still more beautiful during these five years.”

The First Passage of Arms

Bismarck was invited to Fontainebleau by the Emperor, and, walking in the Jardin de Diane, the two men discussed political questions. The Emperor asked his guest point-blank if he thought the King of Prussia was inclined to enter into an alliance with him. Bismarck took refuge in a polite and evasive answer. The Emperor made a fresh attempt, and spoke of the advantages of a "Diplomatic Alliance." But Bismarck, who knew how opposed his King was to any *rapprochement* with France, was greatly embarrassed.

"In face of the Emperor," he said, "I was like Joseph before Potiphar's wife."

And one knows, in fact, that the attitude of the son of Jacob and Rachel was one of extreme awkwardness in face of the ardent advances of the Egyptian woman.

The Fontainebleau interview had no results; though at least, coming after those of 1855 and 1857, it allowed the Joseph of Schönhausen to study the character of his interlocutor, and to divine the vagueness and indecision of the thought that could thus lay itself bare, heedless of precautions.

In this same interview the Emperor declared that before long there would be a rising in Berlin, a revolution in the country, and that the King would have the entire nation against him if he attempted a plébiscite.

And Bismarck made this somewhat impertinent reply: "Our people don't build barricades; in Prussia Kings alone make revolutions."

This was the Emperor's verdict on Bismarck:

"He is not a serious man." On his side, asked by a Russian diplomat what he thought of Napoleon III, Bismarck answered in the words of La Fontaine : "*De loin, c'est quelque chose ; et de près, ce n'est rien.*" (Seen from afar, he is something ; seen near, he is nothing.)

The Ambassador had not much to do in Paris at this season ; for amusement and instruction he set forth on a journey over France. Chambord and the castles on the Loire, Bordeaux, Bayonne, Biarritz—whence he pushed on as far as Saint-Sebastien—Pau, Lourdes, Cauterets, Bagnères, Luchon, Toulouse, saw the passing of this traveller, enchanted at living his own life, and delighted with the scenes which France offered him, especially in the region of the Pyrenees.

While on his way he had news of Berlin through Roon : the King was still hesitating over his decision, but the Ambassador's friends were still importunate. "The pear is ripe," said one laconic despatch. At Paris he found another despatch signed with an assumed name. "*Periculum in mora*" (Make haste).

He delayed no longer ; the next day, the 19th of September, he left for Berlin.

His Embassy to France had lasted four months in all ; the whole interest of this flying visit, no doubt, centred for him in the Fontainebleau interview, when a few short hours had let him see—as man to man—what the Emperor of the French was.

Bismarck arrived at Berlin in the midst of a

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political crisis. In February 1860 Roon had set forth his scheme for military reorganization; since then relations had become more and more strained between the Government, which approved of the plan, and the Second Chamber, which dreaded an excessive extension of militarism. Roon had won only some support by speaking of an attempt at reform of a temporary nature; but the attempt was not long in taking the character of a definite organization. The Chamber had wished to protest, and had been dissolved in March 1862. A new Chamber, animated by the same spirit, had first, in September, refused the credits asked for the reform of the Army. Roon had not waited for this vote to telegraph to his friend that there was "danger in delay," and Bismarck had hastened back.

Wilhelm I was convinced of his rights; but, worn out as he was by the difficulties which had only increased for two years, and thinking that a younger monarch might more easily get out of them, he had made up his mind to leave the throne to the Crown-Prince, who was one day to be the Emperor Friedrich III. However, he consented to have—on the 22nd of September—another interview with Bismarck, who had just arrived.

"I will not govern," he said, "unless I am in such a position as to do so in the way for which I can answer to God, to my own conscience, and to my subjects. But I cannot do it if I am to govern according to the will of the present majority of the Landtag; and I no longer find Ministers who are

Bismarck

inclined to direct my Government without submitting themselves and me to the parliamentary majority. Therefore I have decided to give up my sovereignty, and I have already prepared my Act of Abdication, actuated by the motives I have pointed out."

He showed Bismarck the document, who replied that he was ready to enter the Ministry, and that he was confident that with Roon he could constitute a stable Cabinet.

"Are you prepared," said Wilhelm, "to support, as Minister, the reorganization of the Army?" "Yes, sire." "Even against the majority of the Landtag?" "Even against the majority." "Then it is my duty to attempt the continuation of the struggle with you, and I will not abdicate."

The interview was prolonged, and Bismarck confirmed Wilhelm I in his decision by this emphatic declaration :

"I would rather perish with the King than forsake your Majesty in the fight against parliamentarianism."

The King threw the Act of Abdication aside and tore up a programme in which he had made some concessions to the Liberals.

That same evening Bismarck was appointed Minister of State and Provisional President of the Ministry.

The future Chancellor and the future Emperor had thus linked their destinies by a bond that death alone was able to sever, twenty-six years later.

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Bismarck's entry into the Ministry was received ill by the Second Chamber of the Landtag, which looked upon him as a pure reactionary.

**Strife with
the Chamber
of Deputies**

The first words he spoke before a commission increased this displeasure when, on the discussion of the budget, he was heard to claim equal rights for the King, the First Chamber, and the Chamber of Deputies. A propos of general politics, he had added : " Germany does not look for the Liberalism of Prussia but for its strength ; Bavaria, Würtemberg, Baden, may be favourable to Liberalism ; that is why no one will assign to them the rôle of Prussia. The great questions of the day will not be settled by speeches or the decisions of the majority—that was the great mistake of 1848 and 1849—but by iron and blood" (*durch Eisen und Blut*).

Iron and blood, iron and fire, in Latin or German : one recognizes the brutal formula, his familiar formula.

Bismarck thought that the words he had spoken on the 30th of September, 1862, might have been used against him with Wilhelm, and he was right. Having gone to meet him when travelling, and getting with him into an ordinary first-class carriage, he found him "visibly depressed." The King was still under the impression of his talks with Queen Augusta. Bismarck wanted to explain his words, but Wilhelm interrupted him :

" I foresee exactly how it will all end. Down there, in the *Opern Platz*, beneath my windows, they'll cut off your head, and then, a little later, mine."

Bismarck

Bismarck simply answered, "And after that, sire?" "Well, after that we shall be dead."

"Yes," vehemently retorted Bismarck, "after that we shall be dead; but one must needs die sooner or later, and could we perish in a worthier way? As for me, I should die fighting in my King's Cause, and your Majesty in sealing with your blood the royal rights conferred on you by God; whether it be on the scaffold or on the field of battle, nothing could alter the honourable fact that we should have gloriously risked life and person to defend the rights granted by the grace of God. Your Majesty must not think of Louis XVI; in life and death he showed weakness, and he does not make a fine figure in history. But does not Charles I always remain an august historical figure, when, after having drawn the sword for his rights and lost the battle, he was still inflexible, sealing with his blood his ideal of his royal rights? Your Majesty must fight; you cannot capitulate; you ought to resist the violence done you, even were your person in danger."

As he listened to his Minister, eighteen years his junior, speaking with such authority and energy, the King of sixty-five was transfigured; once more he became the Prussian officer, ready to fight to the death for the Monarchy and the Fatherland. The conversation in the badly lighted railway-carriage continued in the same strain, and when they reached the station at Berlin, Wilhelm was in a serene state of mind, one might even say, lively and bellicose.

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The Minister had permanently reconquered his King.

A few days later Bismarck was beaten in the Second Chamber on the vote for the Budget by a very big majority : 251 votes against 36. His answer was to have himself appointed definitively President of the Council and Minister of Foreign Affairs. He reconstituted his Ministry, keeping next to himself only one eminent personage, Roon, who combined the two offices of Minister of War and of the Navy ; the other Ministers were kept to a lower plane.

Bismarck installed himself in the home of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 76 Wilhelmstrasse, almost at the corner of the Wilhelmplatz ; it was in this house that was to be made the history of contemporary Germany, and then a part of the history of Europe.

Bismarck said one day to his confidant, Maurice Busch, that he had always " paid with both hands. That means that I have always put all my heart into my work ; I have spent all the strength and health I had in each thing I have accomplished " ; and he went on to give an example of his unremitting diligence : every day he kept at work to a late hour at night, though it was true that he got up late in the morning.

" My life is like Laporello's, no rest day or night, and nothing that gives me pleasure. . . . I am almost exactly like a horse in a riding-school, perpetually moving and never getting a step farther."

The President of the Council had a very distinct feeling that his part was difficult to play, very difficult : at home, it was either to overcome the

Bismarck

obstinacy of the Second Chamber or to find the means of governing by doing without its concurrence ; abroad, to prepare for the conflict with Austria which seemed to him absolutely certain to come.

Formerly he had been able to believe that Austria and Prussia might lend each other mutual support, he had even said so from the tribune when he was a Deputy ; but that had been " a youthful dream, born of the result of the Wars of Independence and the impressions received at college."

What he had seen and guessed at Frankfort had speedily disillusioned him ; the German position was in the grip of a " Gordian Knot," as he himself expressed it.

It was necessary, therefore, to forge a sword which would ensure victory in the day of battle. Roon had undertaken to reorganize the army on technical grounds. Bismarck held that in this matter political grounds bore a no less imperious character ; consequently, the army must be reinforced at any cost, for it was an instrument that might be wanted at short notice.

From the 27th of January, 1863, Bismarck set forth his views from the tribune of the Second Chamber with brutal frankness. It **"Might goes before Right"** was with respect to the discussion on the Address, the Ministers having accused him of violating the Constitution.

" How are laws made ? " said the President of the Council. " By agreement between the Crown and the two Chambers. . . . All constitutional life is a series of compromises. If one of the Powers

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persists in its views with pedantic absolutism, the series of compromises is interrupted ; in their place arise contentions, and, as the existence of the State cannot stop, these contentions degenerate into a question of power. Whosoever holds the power in his hand continues to go forward in his own way ; because the life of the State, I repeat, cannot stop for a moment. The Government is firmly resolved, so long as I possess his Majesty's confidence, to oppose strongly the efforts you will make to extend your legislative powers beyond the limits laid down by the Constitution. The rights it gives you will remain yours without any restriction. But what you claim beyond this we refuse, and we will steadfastly maintain the rights of the Crown in the face of such claims."

During the sitting Count von Schwerin, a Deputy, rose to speak against Bismarck's theory, and summed it up in these words :

" The President-Minister has just said, ' Might goes before Right ' ; say what you like, we have the might, and we shall put our theory into practice ! "

Bismarck who had left the hall, came back at once as soon as he had been informed of this interpretation of his words ; he mounted the tribune in order " to set right officially that I had been misunderstood."

His explanations did not destroy the effect produced by Schwerin's striking saying ; if Bismarck had not spoken the words, they were truly the summary of his thoughts. His foreign policy

was soon to be a startling confirmation of them. And so the saying has remained, and will remain in history to characterize this Prussian policy, embodied by Bismarck during his Ministry, as by Frederick II in the eighteenth century, as by William II in our days: "*Macht geht vor Recht*" (Might goes before right).

In spite of Bismarck's opposition the address had been voted. It was the beginning of a series of conflicts. One day, when the President of the Chamber had threatened Bismarck with being called to order, the latter answered insolently:

"The President's power ends at the place I hold here. I recognize no higher authority than that of his Majesty the King, and I am not aware of any provision of the law or the Constitution that can make me submit to the discipline of the President."

The discussions spread even to the Royal Family. À propos of an order to the Press, the Crown Prince, before the authorities at Danzig, did not conceal the lively dissatisfaction the ministerial policy was causing him. The King asked his son to retract: he refused. He wrote a long letter to Bismarck which contained this sentence:

"I look upon those who are pushing the King, my father, to such extremes as the most dangerous advisers of the Crown and the country."

The Minister simply wrote on the margin, "Youth is hasty in its judgments," and strove to make up the quarrel between the father and son; then he made the King, who was in complete

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accord with his point of view, sign the Dissolution of the Chamber of Deputies, in September 1868.

The elections took place in October ; the Progressives came back with a big majority, and the defeat of the Minister was striking. Bismarck was not greatly affected ; his King had absolutely adopted his ideas and ways of acting ; that was enough for him.

A few days after the elections fortune was going to give him and Roon the opportunity of making trial of the new military organization.

On the 15th of November, 1863, Frederick VII, the King of Denmark, died. Bismarck was to take advantage of this event and from it to bring to pass the war with Denmark.

In this year, 1863, Bismarck had made a partial mobilization of the army. An insurrection had

**The rising
in Russian
Poland**

broken out in Russian Poland. France and England were profoundly in sympathy with the insurgents ; the Governments of Napoleon and Victoria appealed to Petersburg and attempted to persuade the Tsar to show clemency. Bismarck set to work in a different fashion ; he began sending regiments to the province of Posen so as to prevent the insurrection spreading to the Prussian regions of Poland, and then he despatched General von Alvensleben to Petersburg on a mission to propose to Alexander II common action against the insurgents.

The Poles, as he was one day to declare with the most insulting contempt, felt the need of a rising every fifteen years, "in order to freshen up their

Bismarck

feelings"; how could they reconstruct a "new imaginary State"?

The Alvensleben agreement was signed on the 8th of February, 1863; the troops of the two countries were to have the right to pass the frontier, and the two Governments were mutually to give up the rebels. The insurrection did not take long to suppress, and a fresh terror hovered over unhappy Poland.

What really mattered to Bismarck in these Polish affairs was that by his swift and decisive action he had won the sympathy of Alexander II. If Prussia might one day have to use force against Denmark, or Austria, or—who knew?—against France, the remembrance of the service she had spontaneously rendered to Russia in 1863 would procure her, if not effective collaboration, at least a benevolent neutrality on the part of that Power. Bismarck needed no more; Prussia, assured of peace on her eastern front, could turn her aggressive attention north, south, or west. Bismarck began by the north.

There can be no question here of explaining the origin of the war with Denmark; the interest would be slight, and there would be a great risk of going astray in an inextricable labyrinth. On this most perplexing question, there is a saying of Palmerston's: "Only three persons understood it: Prince Albert, who is dead; a Danish statesman, who has gone out of his mind; and I, who have forgotten it."

**The War
with
Denmark**

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The two Danish Duchies, situated on the south of Jutland, Slesvig and Holstein, not to speak of the little territory of Lauenberg, were, from an international point of view, in a very complicated position. Holstein and Lauenberg, mainly inhabited by Germans, were at the same time integral provinces of the Danish Monarchy and of the States of the Germanic Confederation. Slesvig did not possess this mixed character, being purely Danish ; but its southern portion was inhabited and worked by a population mostly German, which dreamed of uniting it with Holstein ; and, in consequence of this fact, the Danish Government came across many difficulties in the administration of the Duchies.

Europe had already interfered in the question of the Elbe Duchies, improperly at least as to Slesvig, it was said ; the Treaty of London of 1852 had proclaimed the integrity of the Danish Monarchy, and recognized in advance Prince Christian of Glucksberg as legitimate successor of the reigning King, Frederick VII ; Prussia and Austria were among the Signatory Powers of this Treaty. In 1863 things came to pass in accordance with the Treaty of London : Frederick VII having died on the 15th of November, Christian of Glucksberg became King of Denmark under the name of Christian IX.

At once a competitor, a relation of the dead King, Frederick of Augustenburg, took the title of Duke of Slesvig-Holstein ; he demanded the autonomy of the Duchies and attempted to have

Bismarck

himself recognized as their sovereign. One whole party at the Court of Berlin was inclined to recognize the claims of the Prince of Augustenburg and to compel the King of Denmark to give up the Duchies. With a cynicism worthy of his friend and of the whole history of Prussia, Roon said: "The question is chiefly one of might, not of right."

As for Bismarck, it is curious to see how prudently he unmasked his batteries. His plan was already settled, as were all the plans of this man, who never acted on impulse, but was always cautious, a realist, and stubbornly persistent. The question was not how to make the Duchies into a new State, but to incorporate them in Prussia. This must take time and cleverness.

"In foreign policy," he said, "I do as I used to do in woodcock shooting: I don't advance a step unless I find a spot on which I can stand solidly and surely."

If Prussia intervened in the question of the Duchies, she could do it only with the common agreement of the Federal Diet, and therefore with Austria, which presided over the Confederation. From the month of November Bismarck was making overtures to Vienna in view of eventual common action. Francis-Joseph's Government made no objection; from that time it allowed itself to be caught up in the wheels of the machine, never thinking that it would gain no profit from the evil action in which it was a partner and that it would be tricked.

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Later on, Bismarck said there was only one title he would have willingly accepted, "that of Duke of Slesvig-Holstein, because that is the diplomatic campaign of which I am the most proud."

Bismarck had decided to startle the Council of State with his plan of annexing the Duchies; he had taken quite a course in history in order to recall that, since the great Elector, Frederick-William, the Hohenzollerns had never ceased extending their territories right and left: why should not William I follow the example of his illustrious predecessors?

"When I said that they all began to look at me with an expression that seemed to say I must have taken a bottle too much that morning," and when they brought him the Minutes of the sitting to sign, he noticed that the secretary had suppressed just those passages in which he had expressed himself most forcibly, on the supposition that the omission would please him.

"Well, not at all," said he; "I am well aware that you think I've taken a drop too much; but I don't care. I expect everything I have said to be strictly set down."

As for the Chamber of Deputies, it persisted in its irreconcilable opposition. In vain did Bismarck recall the saying of the Sergeant-King: "I establish sovereignty like a brazen rock"; in vain he added: "That brazen rock is still standing; it forms the base of Prussian history, of Prussian glory, of Prussia become a great Power, and of

Bismarck

Constitutional Monarchy. You will never succeed in shaking that brazen rock."

None the less did the Chamber refuse the military credits. Bismarck had them passed by the Upper Chamber and approved by the King in keeping with the principle that the life of the State cannot stop for an instant.

The Federal Diet wanted to impose various conditions on Christian IX for the administration of the Duchies; he refused. His refusal became the pretext for war. France and England, who had signed the Treaty of London, permitted the execution of this military design. It was a great mistake, which was to be cruelly expiated before long.

The School of Salerno had a precept salutary not only for bodily health, *Principiis obsta* (oppose the beginnings of things).

The silence of the Western Powers in the war of 1864 was in itself a moral complicity. On the other hand, if the Bismarckian policy had been held in check in the question of Holstein and Slesvig, it could not have devised, six years later, the question of Alsace, and, in consequence, the evils of to-day might have been avoided. But let us not regret it over-much, despite all the blood, all the tears, all the desolation they cost us; for their result will be to put a term to the reign of violence from which Europe has too long suffered.

The war of 1914 was born of Bismarck's deeds; but the war of 1914 will destroy the deeds of Bismarck.

The war of Denmark was to reveal the military

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qualities of the Chief of the Prussian Great General Staff, General von Moltke, who had left Denmark, his own country, while a lieutenant, to take service in Prussia ; and from this time, the triumvirate—Bismarck, Roon, and Moltke—which has done so much for the brutal greatness of Prussia and for our misfortune, was formed. It may be noted, by the way, that Moltke, who was fifteen years older than Bismarck, was at the head of the Great General Staff during thirty-one continuous years ; it is thus easy to understand that, under these conditions, he was able to create and impose a doctrine. Bismarck, Minister of Foreign Affairs for twenty-eight years ; Roon, Minister of War for fourteen ; Moltke, Chief of the General Staff for thirty-one ; let us once more remind the parliamentarians, whose passion is the overthrowing of Cabinets and men, of these figures. Little Denmark met the combined forces of Prussia and Austria with heroic resistance ; but, from April 1864, the loss of Düppel had decided their fate, for it had opened to the invaders the approach to Jutland. A Conference of Powers, held in London, could alter nothing in results won by force. The Crown-Prince of Prussia vainly urged moderation on Bismarck, of course as a matter of expediency.

“ I think I understand,” he wrote to him, “ that in the war we are now waging on Denmark you have some secret view, some mental reservation as to Prussian aggrandisement. Let me briefly tell you my opinion, which is that such projects falsify all our German policy and prepare for us complica-

tions with Europe. It will not be the first time Prussia has tried to take in the other Powers, and she will end by falling between two stools."

Nevertheless, Bismarck gave the Prince of Augustenburg, whose candidature had provoked the war, to understand that he had incurred the hostility of Russia, and would have to pay the costs of the war, etc. Frightened by these threats, the wretched candidate gave up the game; he had played a ridiculous part in this affair, and perceived a little later that Prussia had made a complete fool of him. Bismarck had dismissed him in a few curt words: "I called him 'Highness' at first," he said; "then, as he refused to make over the Port of Kiel to us, I called him only 'Most Serene,' telling him that we should be quite able to wring the neck of the chicken we had hatched."

Denmark had finally lost Jutland, and, in their turn, the invasion of the islands was beginning. To prevent still greater misfortunes, Christian IX, on the 15th of July, signed an armistice. Bismarck, who had gone to Vienna for the negotiations, was the object of general curiosity; they looked at him, he said "as if he were a crocodile intended for the Zoological Gardens."

The Treaty of Vienna, on the 30th of October, 1864, completed the loss of the Duchies of Slesvig, Holstein, and Lauenberg for Christian IX; moreover, he undertook not to interfere in any measures which the Emperor of Austria and the King of Prussia might take with regard to these Duchies.

Thus, in the face of an indifferent Europe, was

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accomplished a great iniquity, destined to bring forth one day others still greater. What was now to be done with the spoils wrested from Denmark ?

“ We are looking at the question of the Duchies,” said Bismarck, “ like two fellow-guests before an enticing dish.”

From the territorial point of view, Austria had nothing to gain from annexations in the North of Germany ; therefore Francis-Joseph’s Government was quite disposed to make no claim to them, of course in consideration of compensation ; and for the Emperor’s Ministers that compensation was already discovered—the County of Glatz, which Frederick II had formerly stolen from Silesia and which broke like a wedge into the frontier of Bohemia. But they were obliged to give up carrying the question on to that ground ; William I did not mean to give up anything whatever of the territories acquired by his predecessors. Austria could not succeed in getting out of the wheels of the machine which she had allowed to catch her up ; far from it indeed, for she was about to get herself into a still greater fix on the question of the Duchies, and so, by her unconscious imprudences, to pave the way for the war with Prussia for which Bismarck himself was longing.

With Bismarck, as we know, the idea was an old one, going back to his stay in Frankfort ; a war between Prussia and Austria was, in his eyes, an inevitable necessity. More than a century before, in the time of Maria-Theresa and Frederick II, the duel between the Hapsburgs and the Hohenzollerns

The Con-
vention of
Gastein

Bismarck

had begun. Since then Prussia had immensely increased in territory and influence, and now she must efface the last remembrance of Olmütz, and once for all settle the question of superiority with her rival.

In May 1865 Bismarck had impressed upon the Council of Ministers the probability of a Prusso-Austrian War taking place sooner or later. Moltke, who was admitted to this Council, had concurred in Bismarck's opinion, and promised victory; but the Crown-Prince had pointed out the dangers that might result from such a war—Germany divided into two camps and foreigners interfering in their internal quarrels. In short, the Council had risen without the King making any decision. But, at least, the question had been put, and Bismarck considered that war was "only a question of time." Of the War Ministry, especially the Artillery Services, he inquired, "Are we ready?" War might begin in a fortnight's time.

Nevertheless, in spite of these sinister predictions, there came an easing of the situation. Francis-Joseph had written directly to William I, with an appeal to his spirit of conciliation. The King of Prussia, faithful to the remembrance of the Holy Alliance and without the bellicose spirit of the President of the Council, had received these overtures kindly and had ordered Bismarck to come to an understanding with Austria.

A Convention was therefore signed between the two thieves at Gastein, on the 14th of August, 1865, to arrange for the apportionment of the

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Danish spoil : Lauenberg was handed over absolutely to Prussia ; Kiel became a port of the Germanic Confederation ; the two Duchies were placed under a *Condominium*, Holstein to be governed by Austria and Slesvig by Prussia. There was nothing more to do at present than to let things evolve themselves. The result of this fantastic association could be only war. What, indeed, could be the position of an Austrian Governor of Holstein, isolated from Austria, and north and south held between the jaws of the Prussian pincers ?

On the 15th of September, 1865, William I gave Bismarck an official mark of his satisfaction by conferring on him the hereditary dignity of Count. “ During the three years in which I have confided the direction of the Government to you,” said the King’s letter, “ Prussia has taken a position worthy of her history, and one which foretells for her a happy and glorious destiny in the future. I have often had occasion to do justice to your great merit. To give you a public proof of my gratitude, I raise you and your descendants to the rank of Count, a distinction which will at least prove how much I have appreciated the services you have rendered to the Fatherland.”

The attitude of the French Government during the Danish War had been one of self-effacement. One Minister of Foreign Affairs, Drouyn de Lhuys, would have been inclined to make some representation at Berlin ; the very perspicacious reports sent him by the Ambassador, Benedetti, leaving no room for

**Count von
Bismarck**

**Journey to
Blarritz**

Bismarck

doubt as to the present and future ambitions of Prussia. But Napoleon III, hesitating and uncertain, as was his habit, had limited himself to expressing the wish that the populations of the Duchies should themselves be consulted as to their future position.

Bismarck, without giving a formal adhesion to the idea of a plébiscite, had appeared somewhat inclined to this consultation.

The result is known. The Convention of the 14th of August had divided the populations as butchers divide cattle; at that time there was a lively movement of ill-humour at the Tuileries and on the Quai d'Orsay. A circular from Drouyn de Lhuys to French Diplomatic Agents expressed regret that the "wishes of the populations had not been consulted. . . . We regret to find in the Convention of Gastein no foundation but that of force, no justification but the reciprocal convenience of the co-sharers: violence and conquest prevent the idea of the rights and conscience of peoples."

L'Indépendance Belge had published this circular; the protest it contained could not alter the course of events, but none the less it gave Berlin a disagreeable impression; for the brigand does not ordinarily like to be reminded of his brigandage.

Bismarck was always dreaming of the war against Austria, it was his *idée fixe*. If this war were to succeed, with all the consequences he foresaw, France must not by any intervention whatsoever come in to upset his plans. A military diversion by France in the direction of the Rhine seemed improbable,

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for, at that time, the French Government was growing more and more engaged in the Mexican adventure ; still, whether through military or diplomatic action, danger was always possible on the western frontier of Prussia.

The best thing Bismarck could do, under the circumstances, was to ascertain for himself what were Napoleon's inclinations ; a personal inquiry and a few hours of intimate conversation would give him more than all the reports of official agents. He determined to pay a visit to the Emperor, who was then in *villegiatura* at Biarritz. His wife and daughter accompanied him on this journey, as if to deprive it of any State character.

Passing through Paris, Bismarck had an interview with Drouyn de Lhuys, and another with Rouher, the two best-known French politicians at that time, arriving at Biarritz at the beginning of October 1865.

Mérimée, who was then sharing the country life of the Court at the seaside, did not forget to speak of these visitors. He noticed the feet of the Countess, "the largest on the other side of the Rhine" ; as to the Count, he was "a big German, very polite and intelligent, but not at all simple or sentimental."

Simplicity, truly, was never the besetting sin of the Iron Chancellor.

Walking along the seashore, past the wonderful landscape stretching from the Grande Plage to the Rocher de la Vierge, or on the cliffs that over-

look the Basque coast, Napoleon III and Bismarck had several *tête-à-tête* talks, in which the latter took almost the whole part, the Emperor contenting himself with listening and a sign of approbation from time to time.

There was the question of the relations between Prussia and France, which Napoleon himself wished to keep as good as possible. There was the question of Venetia, which was still wanting from the Kingdom of Victor Emmanuel, though all Italy, "from the Alps to the Adriatic, was free," according to the Imperial saying of 1859; and Bismarck supported the Napoleonic ideas, of which there was none dearer to the nephew of Napoleon I, the former *carbonaro*, than the unity of Italy.

There was the question of the two Danish Duchies, which no doubt Prussia would succeed in having handed over to her entirely by Austria.

There was the question of the territorial modifications which might arise some day or other in the midst of the Germanic Confederation with a view to giving more cohesion to the Hohenzollern lands. "Prussia," said Bismarck, "had an absurd configuration; she had too little chest on the Hesse and Nassau side, and a dislocated shoulder on that of Hanover."

There was the question of the advantages France might find in this territorial alteration; Bismarck himself was "like the pike that sets the fish moving"; who could say if the French-speaking districts on the frontiers of Belgium or Switzerland might not end by falling into Napoleon's net?

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Let us add here an unpublished detail which is certainly of interest.

On his return from Biarritz, Bismarck informed the King of Belgium, Leopold II, that the Emperor Napoleon, when speaking of the possible enlargement of France, had himself asked for not only Dutch Luxemburg but also a part of Belgian Luxemburg.

Leopold was cut to the heart, and all possible protestations and proofs could never remove the conviction that at Biarritz it was Napoleon who had suggested the famous arrangement which, in fact, was the work of Bismarck. Before the Ems telegram, the fact is significant of the man's duplicity.

Between the Emperor and the Prussian Minister nothing definite had been agreed on, nothing signed ; everything had passed in conversation and in considering possibilities. Napoleon had let his guest speak without being so completely duped by his words as he might have seemed ; in fact, he thought the Austro-Prussian War would last long enough to allow him to intervene and play the part of arbiter. As for Bismarck, he brought away the certainty that if France ever acted, she would not act at once, and that was enough for him.

The journey to Biarritz had not been useless ; Bismarck came back convinced that the passivity of the French Government would allow him to undertake and dare everything. For success he counted on the military tool which his friends Roon and Moltke were unceasingly perfecting.

As he went through Paris, before returning to

Bismarck

Berlin, Bismarck had another audience of Napoleon at Saint-Cloud. He had interviews also with the Cavaliere Nigra, the Italian Minister in France; he spoke to him of a war between Prussia and Austria as a sort of fatality that could not be avoided, and a war that might bring about a lucky reaction for Italy. It appeared that the greatness of Italy was as dear to him as the greatness of Prussia. "If Italy did not exist," he said, "it would be necessary to invent her."

Once back in Berlin, Bismarck could consider the results of his journey with satisfaction; to his mind two things were gained: on one hand, France would remain neutral; on the other there was nothing to prevent the conclusion of an alliance between Prussia and Italy. France neutral, Italy an Ally—on these two conditions Bismarck could vouch for the victory of his master. There was nothing more to do but to let things take their course. War was soon to come forth from the Convention of Gastein as the fruit comes forth from the seed.

CHAPTER III

SADOWA

The *Condominium* in the Duchies—The Italo-Prussian Alliance—Plan for a National Parliament—Prussia leaves the Confederation—The war of 1866—The day after Sadowa—Preliminaries of Nikolsburg—Reconciliation with the Chamber—Prussia in 1866—The first Reichstag—The Constitution of 1867—Article 5 of the Treaty of Prague—The abstention of France—The question of Luxemburg—Journey with William I to Paris—The "Customs" Parliament.

ONE day in 1880 Bismarck related to his confidant, Maurice Busch, how the war of 1866 was born.

"What I wanted," he said, "was that

The Condominium in the Duchies

Austria alone should not have authority in Germany, and should not be for ever hiding Prussia under a bushel. So I

asked that Prussia should have a position in the Confederation which would enable her to repulse the aggressions of neighbouring Powers. At Vienna they couldn't even hear that spoken about. . . . So we went on being abominably treated, so much so that one fine day we were obliged, for our personal preservation, to give Austria material proof that she was mistaken in supposing that we had absolute need of her, and that we could do without her assistance. In 1866 we took the first opportunity that occurred and we bundled Austria out."

Bismarck

Indeed, for long it had been Bismarck's *idée fixe* to bring about the struggle with Austria so as to give the Hohenzollerns the supremacy in Germany.

"When I came to power," he said on another occasion, "I had but one aim—the unification of Germany under the hegemony of Prussia."

Therefore, far from waiting for the opportunity, he provoked it.

The Convention of Gastein, which had established the rule of the *Condominium*, was a nest of quarrels; war was its inevitable result. The Prussian Delegate in Slesvig was General Manteuffel; the Austrian Delegate in Holstein was General Gablenz. Their ways of procedure were entirely different: Manteuffel displayed extreme rigidity in his dealings with the population of Slesvig; Gablenz, on the contrary, governed Holstein with real benevolence, even to the point of tolerating demonstrations in favour of the Duke of Augustenburg, the candidate of 1864, whom Bismarck had ousted in so cavalier a fashion. Bismarck addressed a strong complaint against the Austrian Cabinet to Werther, the Prussian Ambassador at Vienna.

"It is absolutely necessary for us," he said, "to make our mutual relations clear. If the understanding between the two Powers cannot be realized as we wish, we ought to secure for ourselves perfect liberty for our entire policy, and make whatever use of it we believe conforms with the interests of Prussia."

In the month of February the question of war was discussed at a great Council, to which important

personages, like Moltke and Manteuffel, had been specially summoned.

The King declared that the ill-will of Austria in the matter of the Duchies made the thought of war a duty ; Prussia did not intend to provoke it, but she did not dread it.

Bismarck, Moltke and Manteuffel supported William's words by political and military arguments. The Crown-Prince spoke against them, fearing foreign intervention. In short, no decision was taken at the sitting, but for those present the opening of hostilities was only a question of opportunity.

It only remained for Prussia to conclude the Alliance with Italy, on which matter Bismarck had brought back a sort of tacit consent from Biarritz. It might be all the easier as the two future Allies were in equal need of each other.

**The Italo-
Prussian
Alliance.**

Since the unexpected ending of the war of 1859, Italy had never ceased thinking of Venetia, the seductive *Irredenta*, which she had thought to seize after Solferino, and which as by a sudden, unexpected blow, had been forbidden her. She could no longer rely on the military assistance of France ; and, as for wresting Venetia from Austria by her own unassisted strength, it was madness to think of it ; in sheer necessity, an ally was indispensable to her.

This ally was plainly indicated : Prussia, in fact, did not conceal her ambition as to annexing the Danish Duchies ; she could not do so but at

the price of a war with Austria ; and it was clear that her chances of victory would be immensely increased if a part of the forces of her future enemy were detained on the southern side of the Alps while she herself would carry her offensive action into Bohemia.

The President of the Cabinet at Florence and Minister of Foreign Affairs, General La Marmora, was a decided partisan of this alliance ; it harmonized perfectly with the great admiration he felt for the Prussian military régime. Under these conditions the compact was speedily concluded.

An Italian agent, General Govone, was sent to Berlin by the Government of Victor Emmanuel to prepare the Alliance ; the official aim of his mission was to visit the military establishments of Prussia. He had several interviews with Bismarck, who, in the course of them, partly revealed his plans. To give the coming war its amplest character and to ensure its being well received in Germany, Bismarck spoke of "again bringing forward the question of reform in Germany set off by a German Parliament," and in a word it was to take up again the programme of the Unionists and Liberals of 1848, but with this important difference, that this programme would be carried out by Prussia and to her own profit.

Let us remember his saying to Napoleon III, four years later, in the Fontainebleau interview : "In Prussia Kings alone make revolutions."

Rumours of war began to circulate amongst the public ; Bismarck did not contradict them. One day when, at dinner, he was seated next the wife

of the Minister of Saxony to Berlin, and she was expressing her uneasiness about the possible conquest of Saxony, he said, half seriously, half humorously :

“ Don’t you doubt it ; I’ve never thought anything else, and I’ve never ceased preparing for it since I entered the Ministry. The time is coming fast ; our guns are all cast ; you’ll soon have the opportunity of satisfying yourself whether our transformed artillery is not superior to the Austrians’.”

Bismarck’s neighbour, far from reassured, declared that she would go to take refuge in her castle in Bohemia.

“ Don’t go to Bohemia,” said he with a knowing look, “ you’ll be exposed to terrible adventures, for we shall beat the Austrians in the neighbourhood of your domain ; go quietly to your castle at Knauthheim, where you’ll be safe from accidents.”

On the 8th of April the treaty between Prussia and Italy was signed at Berlin ; Italy undertook to attack Austria in Venetia, if, within three months, Prussia herself began hostilities against Austria.

Although the treaty had not been made public, an uneasy atmosphere was beginning to spread

over Germany ; the Biarritz interview,

Plan for a National Parliament the exchange of notes between Berlin and Vienna, Govone’s mission to Berlin, the rumours that leaked out as to

military preparations, justified this uneasiness. It was with a sort of stupefaction that it became known that the Diet of Frankfort had just been

startled—on the 9th of April—by the unexpected motion of the Delegate for Prussia, Savigny :

“ May it please the Diet to decide that a Council, the result of direct election and universal suffrage of the entire nation, be convoked, in order to discuss the plans of the Government on the reform of the Confederation.”

Up to now Bismarck had approached the Prussian Chambers horsewhip in hand, and behold ! all of a sudden he was making himself the instrument of the revolutionary party ; he was asking for a National Parliament, a Parliament the result of universal suffrage. Could one believe in the sincerity of this *volte-face* ?

The great German States, like Bavaria, Saxony, Hanover, Würtemberg, Baden, were little inclined to such an adventure ; they did not conceal their sympathy for the *status quo*, that is to say, the cause of Austria.

One night, when Bismarck was leaving the Castle to go back to the Wilhelmstrasse, a student fired five shots at him from a revolver. By a sudden reaction, manifestors collected before the Ministry and cheered the Minister, who had courageously faced the assailant ; shouts of “ *Hoch Bismarck !* ” resounded ; they were the first echoes of popularity.

Meanwhile, Napoleon, who was a believer in the virtue of Conferences, was talking of getting together a Congress to determine the relations of Prussia and Italy with Austria. This idea was opposed to Bismarck’s plans, which were for rapid and brutal action—*ferro et igne* ; it was on these terms only

that it could be effective. Luckily for him, Austria would not listen to any talk of a Congress ; it was enough for her to be ridiculed by Prussia, and to be challenged by Italy, who made no secret of her warlike preparations ; she refused all intervention, and the Congress did not take place.

The situation was too strained not to run the risk of rupture ; but Bismarck, keeping his game quiet, was waiting ; in fact, he wished to leave the initiative and the responsibility for the rupture to Austria ; if Prussia were attacked, it would be easier to win opinion to his side.

On the 1st of June he gained his ends. On that day Austria denounced the Treaty of Gastein ; moreover, she declared that she charged the Diet with determining the fate of the Duchies. Before leaving the Diet time to act, Bismarck hastened to seize one of the objects of litigation. Manteuffel, who was ruling in Slesvig, was ordered to occupy Holstein ; he did so on the 10th of June, without striking a blow ; for Gablenz, shut in north and south between the Prussian troops, had but one thing he could do : to prevent being taken, he had, with his small army, retired into Hanoverian territory on the left bank of the Elbe.

Austria believed in victory because she knew she could rely on a large party in the Diet. Her

Delegate at the Diet stated that the occupation of Holstein by Prussia was a violation of the rights of the Confederation, and, in consequence, she claimed the mobilization of the Federal Army against Prussia.

**Prussia leaves
the Con-
federation**

Bismarck

On the 14th of June the Diet had to vote on this proposal ; by nine votes to six it adopted the proposal of Austria. The representative of Prussia, in his turn, spoke, declaring that his Government no longer belonged to the Confederation ; she looked upon it as dissolved, and would return at her own time into the reconstituted Germanic body, when Austria had been excluded from it. On the 14th of June, 1866, the Germany of the Congress of Vienna was for ever dead.

It is said that Bismarck, on that historic day, consulted his Bible, and chanced upon these verses from the Psalms :

“I will be glad and rejoice in Thee,
I will sing praise to Thy name, O thou most High.
When mine enemies are turned back
They shall fall and perish in Thy presence,
For Thou hast maintained my right and my cause.”

In these words of King David Bismarck saw a presage of victory. Truly, he might have found texts in the Bible denouncing duplicity and violence ; but, at least, it is a note not to be forgotten concerning Bismarck, that religious ideas were often mixed in his conduct as a realistic and matter-of-fact statesman.

In 1865 he wrote to a friend :

“ I hope that among the many sinners who do not boast of their piety God will give me also His grace, and, in the midst of the dangers and doubts of my mission, will not take from me the support of the humble faith with which I seek my way.”

It has been already said that in 1870, when he was

just about to leave Berlin for the campaign in France, he received the Sacrament.

The war of 1866 began in an unfortunate manner for the Allies ; on the 24th of June, the army of Victor Emmanuel was beaten at Custozza by the army of the Archduke Albrecht. Still, although this battle had been a great defeat, it had not failed to serve indirectly the Italo-Prussian cause ; for it had kept in the region of the Adige and the Mincio ninety thousand men of the best Austrian troops, which could not take part in the campaign in Bohemia.

Better news was soon heard at Berlin ; the Hanoverian army had capitulated ; Saxony had been occupied, and the invasion of Bohemia had begun. The people of Berlin rushed in crowds to the Wilhelmstrasse cheering Bismarck. He appeared at a window of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. " We owe our success," he said, " to our King, who created a disciplined army. When he had got it, its maintenance brought him many troubles and struggles ; now you see how right he was. Therefore let us thank God, and praise the King, the creator of this army."

Bismarck had left Berlin on the 20th of June, with Roon and Moltke, to accompany the King to Bohemia. In frequent letters he kept his wife informed of the events of the campaign ; on the 2nd of July he wrote to her : " Send me some French novels to read, but only one at a time." The 2nd of July was forty-eight hours before the day that was to be decisive.

On the 4th of July, beside his King, he had been present at a terrible battle; he had seen the army of Prince Frederick-Charles, the famous Red Prince, rush upon the heights of Lipa to be stopped—powerless—by the crushing fire of an Austrian battery of a hundred and eighty guns; he had seen the army of Herwarth von Bittenfeld stopped too before the crests of Ober-Prim, held by the Saxon army. Sinister rumours spread around him; he himself believed he had smoked his last cigar; he was ready to join in a charge of cavalry to seek his death on the field of battle. But a ray of hope still kept up his heart. He knew that on the north one of Frederick-Charles's lieutenants, General Fransecky, was holding on in the Benateck Wood, stubbornly fighting against fourfold forces. He had heard also that the Crown-Prince's army had begun to come into line on the extreme north, and that, in the afternoon, the three Prussian armies had been able to join forces at the foot of the plateau occupied by Benedek's army. Thus was realized his friend Moltke's formula—Separate marches, joint fights. And at last he had seen the formidable rushes of the three royal armies on to the Austrian and Saxon positions; he had seen what the initiative and offensive alone are able to cause—the collapse of the enemy; and on the evening of that great day, after having known in the morning the agonising emotions of Sadowa, he was enjoying the triumph of Königgrätz.

From that very day, the 4th of July, Austria appeared *hors de combat*. That was enough for

Bismarck. If he had caused this war to break out, it was not at all with the intention of dealing Austria a death-blow, but first of settling in his own way the question of the Duchies and the new form he wished to give to Germany. The very evening of the terrible battle in which Austria had lost about forty-nine thousand men, he said to Moltke, to whom such a speech was unintelligible: "The question of victory is decided; what is to be done now is to restore the old friendship with Austria."

He had quite forgotten a saying of his at Frankfurt—that the finest day of his life would be that on which he would make his entry into Vienna on horseback.

Meanwhile the Prussian army, driving before it the Austrian rearguards, had entered Moravia and was pushing on towards the Danube; on the 18th of July, the Great General Headquarters established itself at Nikolsburg; Bismarck himself took up his quarters in the magnificent castle of Count Mensdorff-Pouilly, Francis-Joseph's Minister for Foreign Affairs.

"My old seignorial castle of Schönhausen," he said with somewhat heavy irony, "is nothing compared with this; that is why I'd rather see myself at Count Mensdorff's than see him in my house."

Bismarck was determined to stop the war. It was not because he was uneasy about the representations the Ambassador Benedetti had come, some days after Sadowa, to make to him on the part of the French Government; he was too sure that Napoleon III

The day
after Sadowa

Bismarck

would not persevere in his fancy for intervention, and that a few vague promises would make everything right. But he did not want to go to Vienna ; he did not wish to inflict a too cruel humiliation on a Power already sufficiently vanquished ; the neutrality of Austria, while looking forward to a possible alliance one day, was a valuable chance in view of future conflicts, and such conflicts must always be thought of.

On the 12th of July, in rest quarters at Czernahora, he had the decision made that the Prussian troops should march in the direction of Presburg ; in this move he saw the double advantage of leaving Vienna alone while still threatening it on the flank, and of holding out a hand to the Magyars, always ready to revolt.

The King had accepted this plan ; the Staff had resigned itself to it, and headquarters were transferred to Nikolsburg.

In this Moravian town, on the 23rd of July, an important Council was held to discuss the course the war was to take. The generals were of opinion that there should be a push to Vienna and an invasion of Hungary ; a military entry into the Austrian capital was in their eyes the logical and certain conclusion of the victory of Sadowa. For over an hour Bismarck fought against this plan, which had the secret assent of the King. The arguments he used were more especially of the political kind, but little of the nature to convince the Military ; he saw that he was about to be beaten, so decided hurriedly to leave the Council

Chamber and retire to his bedroom, which was next it. He threw himself on his bed, so thoroughly unnerved that he was overcome by a violent fit of tears. The others heard this wordless sound through the thin partition, and went away without taking any decision. Bismarck then drew up his arguments in writing, and the next morning took the paper to the King.

This is roughly what he said :

“ We ought to avoid grievously hurting Austria, and leaving her, more than is necessary, with a lasting ill-feeling and a need of revenge. On the contrary, we ought to leave ourselves the possibility of reconciliation with our present enemy, and in any case to look upon the Austrian State as a piece on the European chess-board, and the renewal of our good relations with her as a manœuvre which will always be possible. If Austria is badly hit she will become the Ally of France and any other of our adversaries ; she will even sacrifice her anti-Russian interests to revenge upon Prussia.”

These arguments, others of the same kind, and the fear of cholera, which was beginning its ravages in the army, made scarcely any impression on the King. Back in his room, Bismarck asked himself whether it would not be better to throw himself out of his window on the third story.

The door of his room opened and a hand was laid upon his shoulder ; it was the Crown-Prince.

“ You know,” he said, “ that I was against the war ; you thought it necessary, and must bear the responsibility. If you are now convinced that the

Bismarck

end is gained and that peace ought to be concluded, I am inclined to help you, and to support your opinion with my father."

He came back in half an hour.

"It was a hard task," he said; "but my father has consented."

In fact, William had given his consent in a marginal note on Bismarck's paper, ending with these words: "To my great grief, after such brilliant victories won by the army, I find myself forced to swallow this bitter pill and to accept a shameful peace."

Probably everything in the dramatic account given several times by Bismarck of the scenes at Nikolsburg is not the exact truth; it is proved that in his "Memoirs" he comes up against several impossibilities; but, at least, two things remain—Bismarck's decided wish not to push hostilities further, and to prevent Austria keeping "painful memories," from the moment when he could manage it without hurt to the German policy of Prussia; and, on the other hand, the intervention of the Crown-Prince, whose acceptance of the war had been against the grain, who had, no doubt, behaved very well in it but remained, in spite of Sadowa, or because of Sadowa, a partisan of moderation.

The preliminaries of peace were signed at Nikolsburg three days later, on the 26th of July, at the very place where Bismarck had set himself decidedly against war to the death. Austria, at the intervention of France, ceded Venetia to Italy; beyond this

**Preliminaries
at Nikolsburg**

cession her territory remained intact. She recognized the dissolution of the ancient Germanic Confederation ; she was not admitted into the reconstitution of the new Germany, and consequently she accepted in advance the territorial modifications to be made by her rival.

What a difference between the conditions imposed on Austria in 1866 and those imposed on France in 1871 ! The conditions of 1871, the brutal violence done to a million and a half of the French against their express wish, have had the result of making a gulf between France and Germany that will never be bridged till the day when France recovers her property of Alsace and Lorraine.

Since 1871 all Europe, forced into ruinous armaments, has suffered from the consequences of the Alsace-Lorraine question ; finally, to resolve this question of which France did not speak, but of which she was always thinking, it took no less than the cataclysm which, since the month of August 1914, has shaken Europe and the world to their foundations.

In 1866 there was nothing of the kind. For several years there had been, as it were, a misunderstanding between two rivals quarrelling over a common dwelling ; one of them, having grown stronger, gave the other notice to quit ; that other, glad to get well out of it, packed off at once. The loss of Venetia, to which Austria had resigned herself before the war, hit her in none of her vital interests ; so she gave up the game, asking for nothing. For a few, a very few, years, she was going to content

Bismarck

herself with sulking ; thus, when she saw her vanquisher making advances towards a reconciliation, she forgot all her grudge and, all docility, hastened to join forces. The rôle of second suited her so well that she went into partnership with the victors of Sadowa.

Bismarck had had a true eye for the future, when he had understood that it was in Prussia's own interest not to give Austria a mortal blow, for some day she might have need of her ancient rival. Bismarck's great cleverness was in guessing that the Hohenzollerns might turn the Hapsburgs into their vassals ; to-day, after more than three years and a half of war, they have made them their prisoners. The Faust of Vienna has a mind at times to save his soul, but the Mephistopheles of Berlin holds it and will not release his prey.

Bismarck was back again in Berlin with William I on the 4th of August ; it was a triumphal entry in the midst of enthusiastic acclamations.

**Reconciliation
with the
Chamber** The man who had willed the war, who had forced it on, was now reaping for himself and for his country the reward for his decision and his energy. Bismarck was hailed as the great man, but, as an officer had said to him on the evening of the 4th of July, if the Crown-Prince had reached Sadowa too late, the Minister would have been held the greatest of rascals. The military success had justified the plans of the statesman who had wished to turn Austria out of doors.

The same ideas of moderation that had inspired

Bismarck at Sadowa, were now inspiring him with regard to the Prussian Second Chamber ; he considered that, under present circumstances, the Crown ought to be reconciled with the Deputies. The Speech from the Throne on the 5th of August contained, in fact, a passage which had something of the character of an apology.

“ In late years,” said William I, “ the budget has not been settled in agreement with the National Representation. The public expenses incurred during this period therefore want a legal basis. I feel confident that late events will contribute to bring about an understanding, for which purpose it is indispensable that the Bill of Indemnity asked from the representatives, for administration without a legal budget, should be freely and voluntarily granted.”

A few days later Bismarck himself, from the tribune of the Chamber, pleaded the cause of reconciliation.

“ We desire peace,” he said, “ not because we are *hors de combat* ; on the contrary, the fight to-day is more in our favour than in late years ; nor even that we may escape indictment in the future. . . . We desire peace because the country needs it to-day more than formerly ; because we think we may find it at this moment. We should have sought it earlier if we could have hoped to find it earlier.”

The Chamber, astonished, but won over by this new style of language, did not reject the olive-branch offered by the Minister ; by a big majority,

Bismarck

it voted the Indemnity Bill asked for by the Government.

In the joy of the patriotic victory the adversaries forgot thus their mutual resentment ; from that moment Liberals and Nationalists grouped themselves round the Ministry, and formed the National Liberal party, which, for several years, was to be the firmest support of Bismarckian policy.

It will be supposed that the opposition could no longer show severity to a Minister who was now making up to it, and who had brought about such great results in a few weeks.

**Prussia in
1866**

In fact, while the bulk of the Prussian army was invading Bohemia, and striking the decisive blow at Sadowa, other armies were occupying several of the States of the Confederation which had taken the side of Austria ; according to General Vogel von Falkenstein's rather bombastic saying, all the countries north of the Main were at the feet of his Majesty.

Thus Bismarck intervened to apply his treatment "by iron and fire" ; with no care for the rights of the population, which was nowhere consulted, he increased the Kingdom of Prussia by four million two hundred thousand inhabitants. If he was to be believed, he had preached moderation to his master.

"The King," he said, "had decided to take away a piece of territory from each of the beaten German Princes, as a punishment. 'I am going,' he incessantly repeated to me, 'to exercise the justice of God.' I ended by telling him, one day, that it was better to leave God to exercise His justice alone,

and that he ought not to take more territories than we had need for. If I had listened to him, we should have taken all Northern Bohemia, all Austrian Silesia, and half Saxony. I had hard work to prevent him."

Bismarck a Moderate ! Indeed a curious epithet for this man. Three years earlier, when he heard that England had renounced the Protectorate over the Ionian Isles, he had said : " A State which leaves off taking, and begins to give up, is finished as a great Power."

It was never the idea of Bismarck nor of any other Prussian statesman to leave off taking. The Kingdom of Hanover, the Electorate of Hesse, the Duchy of Nassau, the Free-Town of Frankfort-on-Main, the Duchies of Slesvig and Holstein—such were the *spolia opima* of a campaign which had lasted at most a month.

The Prussian Government had appealed to " the decision of war and the need for the political reorganization of the entire German Fatherland." The Royal Message of the 16th of August set forth that all the wrong was on the side of the four annexed German States ; for " they had declined the neutrality and the Alliance offered them, with security for their territories ; and especially, in consequence of their geographical position, they would be able, in case their autonomy were maintained, in the future to prepare, by a hostile or equivocal attitude, serious obstacles to the political and military action of Prussia."

The real truth is that, after this work of rapine,

Bismarck

Prussia between the Elbe and the Rhine made up now a much more homogeneous mass. Once more Bismarck had acted up to the formula which his master, Frederick II, had formerly used at the expense of Poland: "There is no happiness to compare with that of making a whole of one's States."

The Government had asked for pecuniary rewards for the generals who had led the campaign of 1866; to the names of the generals the Second Chamber's Commission added Bismarck's. In the Chamber itself there was but feeble opposition. How the times had changed! A national recompense of 400,000 thalers—about sixty thousand pounds sterling—was voted to the Minister-President. According to the King's wish, Bismarck employed this sum in the purchase of a great country estate, that of Varzin in Pomerania. He was to make of this property a model of cultivation, in preparation for the time when it should be a retreat for his last years.

Bismarck had taken German opinion by surprise, when, at the beginning of the Prusso-Austrian War, he, the reactionary country gentleman, had taken up on his own account the principles of 1848 and announced the approaching convocation of a Parliament on the basis of universal suffrage. It might have been thought that this promise was, but a plan made for the occasion, and intended to attract the sympathy of Germany for Prussia for the duration of the war. But Bismarck made it a point of honour to

**The First
Reichstag**

make his promise a reality, once the war was finished.

As early as the 15th of August, that is to say, scarcely nine days after his return to Berlin, the Government brought in a Bill: the Reichstag was to be elected by direct and universal suffrage, for the affairs of the Confederation of Northern Germany. Such was the name Bismarck gave to the new Germany, Germany north of the Main, from which Austria was excluded, and where, for the future, Prussia was to exercise incontestable supremacy.

The elections for the Reichstag took place in the month of February 1867; they gave the majority to the National Liberal party, which then had Bismarck's sympathy. It was opened with great pomp at Berlin, on the 24th of February, by a speech from William I. On the 11th of March Bismarck explained to the new Assembly the character of the political transformation just accomplished.

"It could not enter our minds," he said, "to create the theoretical ideal of a Constitution assuring for ever the unity of Germany and leaving full liberty to any particular movement. Let us leave to the future the business of finding—if anywhere it exists—that Philosopher's Stone; our mission at present is not to dream of succeeding, by a few inches, in squaring the circle."

These theoretic formulas, little in Bismarck's ordinary style, were intended to inform the newly elected assembly that it would have no responsible administration, nor any constituent power; but that, such as it was, it represented the wishes of the

Bismarck

German people to the Federal Government, and that was sufficient to allow it to do a useful job.

The Minister ended his speech thus :

“ Set to work quickly, gentlemen. Let us, so to speak, put Germany into the saddle ; she will ride all right by herself.”

The Federal Constitution, such as Bismarck had organized it, was ratified in turn by the Federated Governments, by the Reichstag, and **The Constitution of 1867** by the Parliaments of the different Federated States ; dated the 24th of June, it came into force the 1st of July, 1867.

What was this new Germany ? It was a Confederation of twenty-one States situated north of the Main, grouped around a Federal Government. This Government was made up of three parts : an hereditary President, who was the King of Prussia ; a Federal Council—Bundesrath—composed of delegates of the States, real officials solely dependent on these Governments ; and an Assembly elected by universal suffrage, the Reichstag, representing the German populations.

It must be acknowledged that it was a clever juxtaposition of the three forces that had acted upon Germany for half a century. The ruling of 1815, as it worked at the Diet of Frankfort, took into account only the German States ; in 1848, the German population, after making a vigorous effort, had been on the point of making unity triumph ; since 1862, that is to say, since Bismarck had been President of the Council, Prussia had taken up the idea of unity again for her own benefit and had made

it succeed, at least so far as it meant that she had destroyed the old dualism of the Presidency of Vienna and the Vice-Presidency of Berlin. But, while giving their share to each of these three elements—the States, the populations, and Prussia, the Constitution of 1867 gave to Prussia a decidedly preponderant position.

Under the modest title of President (*Präsident*) the King of Prussia had, in fact, taken for himself nearly unlimited authority. All military and diplomatic power was in his hands ; he bore the title of Head of the Federal Army ; he convoked and dissolved the Reichstag. In his relations with the Confederation, he was represented by the President of the Council of the Prussian Ministers, who, in this particular connection, took the title of Chancellor. The Presidency of the Bundesrath belonged by right to the Chancellor ; in this Council of the States, Prussia was almost certain of always having a majority ; of the forty-three votes divided among the members of the Bundesrath, she herself commanded seventeen, and it was enough for her to add another five to have her motions passed.

Bismarck, who had no partiality for oratorical debauches, relates how he brought the Bundesrath into line from its first sittings.

“ I spoke to my colleagues somewhat in these terms : ‘ Gentlemen, there’s no way of doing anything here with eloquence, or with speeches which expect to convert any one of us to another opinion, because each of us arrives with his conviction in his pocket, that is to say, with instructions from his Govern-

Bismarck

ment. It is only a waste of time ; I think, therefore, we ought to confine ourselves to a simple statement of facts.' And so it was ; nobody made any more speeches, with the result that we got through a lot of business and the Bundesrath did real service."

In a word, in giving Germany universal suffrage and the Reichstag, Bismarck's aim had been, above all, to play the game of Prussia. The Reichstag had no hold on the Federal Government ; it could only reject the laws introduced to it. As to the Federal Government, it was wholly in the hands of Prussia, for, on one side, the King of Prussia was the Supreme Head of the Confederation, and, on the other, the Chancellor presided over the Council of States, and held it, so to speak, at his discretion. Under its Germanic appearance, the work of 1867, conceived by Prussia, carried out by Prussia, imposed by Prussia, was, above all else, a Prussian work.

Bismarck had stopped the Confederation at the line of the Main ; in consequence, four States had escaped the Federal system—the Grand-Duchies of Baden and Hesse-Darmstadt, and the Kingdoms of Würtemberg and Bavaria ; in a word, the vanquished of 1866. Another vanquished Kingdom, that of Hanover, had paid for its defeat in a more cruel fashion. But the isolation of the Southern States was, in Bismarck's mind, a provisional position. At once precautions were taken to prevent their escaping the action that Prussia intended, sooner or later, to take against them. A series of treaties was imposed during the weeks after Sadowa, with a reminder to all of the essential condition that, in

case of war, the Southern States undertook to put all their troops at the disposal of the Confederation of the North. A few months later they were incorporated anew in the economic union of the Zollverein.

In reality, from both the customs and the military point of view, the four Southern States were simply an extension of the Northern Confederation. The famous Main line, beyond which Bismarck had feigned to put a stop to new Germany's schemes, existed only on paper.

In France, politicians who would not see, were congratulating themselves because the Germany of 1815 was now divided into three sections, the Confederation of the North, the Southern States, and Austria. The truth was quite otherwise ; the exclusion of Austria had had the effect of strengthening the new Confederation, and in that Confederation there was a State whose territorial and political preponderance was henceforth indisputable ; for it linked the fortunes of the rest of Germany to its own, even the part of the South which, in appearance, stood outside the new system.

In the course of the events which had just changed in a few months the face of Central Europe, the French Government had very nearly played the part of dupe. The Kingdom of Italy had been augmented by Venetia, and on this Napoleon III might congratulate himself as on a personal triumph, for his idea of 1859 had been completely carried out. His diplomacy had obtained, or he thought it had

**Article 5 of
the Treaty
of Prague**

Bismarck

obtained, another advantage, since in the Treaty of Prague on the 25th of August, 1866, which had restored peace between Austria and Prussia, France had succeeded in having the clause concerning the Danish Duchies thus drawn up :

“ Article 5.—His Majesty the Emperor of Austria transfers to his Majesty the King of Prussia all his rights acquired in the Peace of Vienna of the 30th of October, 1864, over the Duchies of Holstein and Slesvig, with the reservation that if the populations of the northern districts of Slesvig should express, by a free suffrage, the desire to belong to Denmark, they shall be ceded to that State.”

What a fine promissory note was this for Northern Slesvig, where the Danish and protesting elements were in a decided majority ; what a fine promissory note ! And how great a right had the Government of Napoleon III to congratulate itself on this solemn promise as to the rights of the populations !

Never, and under no form did Bismarck proceed to a consultation with the inhabitants of Slesvig, and the famous Article 5 of the Treaty of Prague remained a dead letter. For Bismarck and for William one thing alone counted—the “ decision of war ” ; that is to say, the right of the strongest.

But where the indecency of Germany verily exceeds all limits is when one sees Herr von Kühlmann, the Minister of William II, speaking before the Grand Commission of the Reichstag on the 25th of January, 1915, of the rights of nationalities,

and putting these rights under the patronage of Bismarck by recalling the text of Article 5 in the Treaty of Prague. For more than fifty years the Danish population of Slesvig has remained under the yoke of Prussian militarism ; for more than fifty years the Hohenzollerns have failed, and still fail, to keep a solemnly sworn word, and they come to tell us that Bismarck recognized the right of peoples to settle their own fate.

Could there be a more cynical lie ?

Long after the events of 1866, Bismarck said one day to the Baron de Courcel, Ambassador of the French Republic at Berlin : " Fifteen thousand French soldiers on the right bank of the Rhine would have sufficed to rally the troops of the German Princes opposed to Prussia, and to cut off from its base the Prussian army engaged down in Bohemia by giving the victorious army of the Archduke Albert time to come to the rescue."

**Abstention
of France**

Would fifteen thousand men have produced such an effect ? Would the Archduke Albert, even after his victory at Custozza, have been at liberty to transport his Italian army elsewhere ? Did not Bismarck feel a sort of retrospective pleasure in putting into relief the mistakes of France at an epoch when Prussia had known how to play her game so ably ? It is certain that there are circumstances under which abstention is the worst of errors. *Inertia*, *sapientia* was a saying which, it seems, was correct at the Court of the Tuileries in those days. Alas ! the deliberate decision to do nothing, systematic

Bismarck

inertia, has never had anything in common with wisdom.

Three years earlier, in 1865, à propos of the abstention of France from the drama of the Polish insurrection, Prince Napoleon had spoken in this fashion from the tribune of the Senate : " It has been said that for a great country to speak without acting is a bad thing. We agree. But there would be something worse, which is, when one does not act, not to speak either."

These words remained sadly true.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Drouyn de Lhuys, on his own initiative, had attempted to act in the actual theatre of war ; he had ordered the Ambassador, Benedetti, to overtake Bismarck after Sadowa. Benedetti had succeeded in reaching him on the night between the 11th and 12th of July at Zwittau, in Moravia. Bismarck was somewhat angry that the blundering of the Military Police at the rear of the army should have allowed such a visitor to reach him. Nevertheless, he received him, and a political conversation took place between the two men, lasting from two to five o'clock in the morning.

When they went to rest, in the early hours of the day, Benedetti shared the room of the Councillor of Legation, Abeken, while his secretary, Lefèvre de Béhaine, had to share the bed of the secretary Keudell. In vain had Benedetti attempted discussion with the victor. For his part, Bismarck had ordered the Prussian Ambassador at Paris, Herr von Goltz, to inform Napoleon III personally

of the conditions he was determined to impose on Austria, and which in fact were imposed.

Napoleon had listened, accepted everything, and not made any objection.

"Now," said Drouyn de Lhuys, "there is nothing left for us to do but weep."

Nevertheless, Paris had returned to the idea of a territorial compensation. Since Prussia was increasing herself in an inordinate manner, why should not France, to maintain the equilibrium, obtain the Bavarian Palatinate, which, on the left bank of the Rhine, would extend the territory of Alsace as far as, and comprising, Mayence?

Bismarck, from the tribune of the Reichstag on the 2nd of May, 1871, told, after his own fashion, how Benedetti had come to seek him on the 6th of August, and had offered him the ultimatum: "Mayence or war?" "So be it," he had answered. "We choose war."

Things had not happened in that dramatic manner; but it is certain that Bismarck was quite decided not to yield an inch of German territory, and that he let that be well understood while wrapping up his refusal in protestations of friendship.

"I feel the strong hope," he said with singular audacity, "that France and Prussia will henceforth form a partnership of intelligence and progress."

In face of these repeated defeats, Drouyn de Lhuys sent in his resignation as Minister of Foreign Affairs in August 1866. His place was taken by the Marquis de Moustier, formerly Ambassador to Vienna and Constantinople.

Then a fresh question came into sight, one that has been already spoken of secretly—the question of Luxemburg. The Grand Duchy of Luxemburg was a part of the Germanic Confederation ; its capital had a Prussian garrison. On the other hand, it was the personal property of the King of the Netherlands, William III.

**The question
of Luxemburg**

As this Sovereign had but slight sympathy with Prussia, France had a chance of coming to an understanding with him ; his consent seemed the best warrant of final success. When Benedetti talked with Bismarck of the possibility of this annexation, the latter acknowledged that the King of Holland had the right to dispose of Luxemburg as he pleased, being its sovereign.

“ Manage in such a way,” he added, “ that the cession of Luxemburg is an accomplished fact before the meeting of the Reichstag, and I’ll undertake to make Germany swallow the pill.”

Since Prussia laid her brutal hand on 4,200,000 inhabitants, she could well, truly, let France annex 199,000, by means of a legal cession and a plébiscite. For Napoleon had declared that he would not proceed to the annexation but with the consent of the Luxemburgeois, as he had done for Nice and Savoy.

With what trickery did not Bismarck let us get deep into this affair, obtain the consent of the Grand-Duke, and believe that we had won the case !

Then, when everything appeared settled, behold

him unmasking his batteries and declaring that there had been a mistake. On the 31st of March, 1867, the Prussian Ambassador, von Goltz, suddenly came to M. de Moustier to announce that the Luxemburg business had taken the worst of turns : it had run up against the opposition of the military party in Prussia ; therefore he begged the French Government to go no further.

M. de Moustier's surprise was extreme. At this moment the question was practically settled ; the French Ministry had always gone with Herr von Bismarck in this matter ; it was impossible that they should have been led into a trap.

On the very same day, in Berlin, Bismarck was making to Benedetti the same announcement as Goltz at the Quai d'Orsay. He said that he was overwhelmed by the agitation that had burst forth in Press and Parliament ; he had been in too great a hurry ; inopportune publicity had been given to the matter.

The next day, the 1st of April, 1867, a solemn festival was held at Paris for the opening of the Exposition Universelle, and Napoleon made a speech in praise of the union of peoples and the arts of peace—the classic theme of exhibitions.

That very morning he had received from Mexico despatches which left no doubt as to the tragic end awaiting the Emperor Maximilian ; that evening he received from Berlin the news of a question in the Reichstag which had resounded like a war-cry.

Bennigsen, a member of the National Liberal

Bismarck

party, had put a question to the Minister-President on the Luxemburg affair. In a few violent words he had declared that, if the rumours concerning the cession of Luxemburg were well founded, German patriotism would not permit a Frontier Province to be torn from Germany and given over to the covetousness of France.

To this question, which fulfilled his own wishes, and which was hailed with enthusiastic applause, Bismarck made a moderate and evasive answer; very cleverly he mixed up the "friendly relations Germany maintains with its neighbours" with "the incontestable rights of the populations and the States of Germany."

Right well he knew he had won the game.

If Napoleon picked up the glove, France, which was not ready, was lost; if he did not, she was practically disqualified.

War was the only way of answering such duplicity, but at that time France found it impossible to run such a risk. To save its face, the French Government declared that it asked but one thing—the withdrawal of the German garrison in Luxemburg.

Bismarck made no opposition; it was enough for him that he had prevented France's increase by the smallest particle.

An International Conference was opened in London on the 7th of May; on the 11th, a Treaty for the neutralization of Luxemburg was signed, and Prussia actually evacuated the fortresses.

And now the relations between Paris and Berlin

were all cordiality ; the King of Prussia, who had been already invited to visit the Exposition, arrived at Paris with the Chancellor on the 5th of June. When Bismarck's carriage was going along the Boulevard de Strasbourg, some hissing was heard.

**Journey to
Paris with
William I**

" I am not surprised at this reception," said Bismarck to Admiral Jurien de la Gravière, putting on an air of indifference. " We politicians can't please everybody ; we must take one side."

Bismarck was at all the entertainments the Court offered to its guests, being very good company, and going even so far as to take a few turns at waltzing.

Marshal Vaillant said to him, with true military openness :

" Do you know, Count, that you've made a magnificent impression in Paris ? Every one's saying : ' Really, he's a good sort of fellow.' But," he added, " that's all very well, but you've grown too big for us. One day we shall have to cross swords." And Bismarck answered, with a smile : " Well, let us cross them."

On the 14th of June, William left Paris with Bismarck and Moltke ; the latter had spent his time in walks about Paris which were really Staff reconnaissances. On leaving, the King of Prussia and the Emperor of the French had exchanged the warmest professions ; they had promised to meet again.

They met again, three years later, on the battle-field of Sedan.

On his return to Prussia, Bismarck went to rest for a time on his estate at Varzin ; he had developed a perfect passion for this domain, much in harmony with his inveterate taste for the life of a country gentleman. There was some truth in his wife's jest : " He's more interested in a turnip than in the whole domain of politics."

The Chancellor was perfectly aware that, after the Luxemburg business, war with France had become almost inevitable ; thenceforth the question of rivalry and superiority was put between the two States ; for, if France had made Germany leave Luxemburg, Prussia had prevented France coming in. Sooner or later, this seed of war must bear fruit. As for Bismarck, he had but to wait for the moment when the military instrument, at which his friends, Roon and Moltke, were working without relaxation, should be absolutely ready. Then it would be easy to provide some incident that would lead with certainty to a rupture.

" My patriotism is in no need of stimulation," he said to Bennigsen ; " but the cautions imposed on me by foreign policy do not allow me to yield to the impatience of your friends who want to see me put on seven-league boots."

But Bismarck took great care to keep the four Southern States in dependence on the Confederation, and continued to make them figure in the Customs Parliament which met at Berlin in 1868. Their Deputies sat beside the Deputies of the Confederation ; there was to be no question, and in fact there was

**The Customs
Parliament**

none, but of Custom-house affairs, but economical unity was present to prepare for political unity.

When the Customs Parliament had finished its session, the city of Berlin gave a banquet to its members.

Bismarck made a speech to the Deputies from the South :

"After the work for the interests of Germany which you have done in common, you will take back with you, I hope, the conviction that, in any situation of life, you will again find here the hearts and hands of brothers ; and every fresh meeting, I feel sure, will but bring us the more intimately and firmly together. Let us do our best to keep up this family life. It is with full measure of this feeling that I address a cordial *au revoir* to my German brothers."

It was a war, in 1866, which had begun the constitution of a new Germany by grouping round Prussia most of the Germanic States ; since then, Bismarck's diplomacy had been able to paralyse the action of France, and in the question of Luxemburg to reduce her to playing an almost ridiculous rôle. During this time, Roon and Moltke had continued their work of military organization. In May 1869 a Deputy to the Landtag found that the army was costing a great deal of money. "To economize in that matter," replied Bismarck, "might become too dear. As a roof protects against bad weather, as a dyke protects against inundation, so does our army protect the whole extent of our production."

The time was now come to make the people of

Bismarck

Baden, of Hesse, of Würtemberg, and of Bavaria enter the great German family.

To attain this end a fresh war was necessary ; it would break down the last resistance and complete the formation of the Germanic Fatherland. The reports of the French Military Attaché at Berlin pointed out in 1869 that this was almost at the mercy of the slightest incident. Colonel Stoffel had clearly seen through the plans of the man who was to write in his " Thoughts and Memories " : " I was convinced that the abyss dug between the North and South of the country during the course of history by the divergence of racial and dynastic sentiment, and the difference in the style of living, could not be more happily filled up than by a national war against a neighbouring people, our ancient aggressor."

Ancient aggressor ! France would have the right to throw back this epithet to the Germany of Ariovistus ; to the Great Invasion ; to Otho IV ; to Charles V ; to Bismarck and to William II. But, from the pen of the Chancellor, it was just a formula, which he needed to stir up hatred of us. From this hatred of France he wished to make the cement with which to consolidate an enlarged and Prussianized Germany.

In 1870 Bismarck reckoned that the time for attacking France had come, as he had attacked Denmark in 1864, and Austria in 1866. He did it with a mixture of duplicity and cynicism which has stamped this portion of his political work, more than any other, with a fundamentally brutal and odious character.

CHAPTER IV

THE WAR OF 1870

A conversation in 1862—The Hohenzollern candidature—William I at Ems—The Ems telegram—The question of Strasburg and Metz—At Sedan—At Ferrières—At Versailles—The question of the Black Sea—Bombardment of Paris—Armistice of the 28th of January—Preliminaries of the 26th of February—Protest of the Deputies of Alsace-Lorraine—Return to Berlin—Treaty of Frankfort

IN London, in the *salons* of the Russian Embassy, one evening in the month of June 1862, the Ambassador to England of Alexander II, Baron Brunnow, was giving a dinner in honour of his colleague Bismarck, at that time Prussian Ambassador to Paris, who had left his house in the Rue de Lille for a few days and come to London to make the acquaintance of the principal politicians of Great Britain.

Among Baron Brunnow's guests were Gladstone, who was then Chancellor of the Exchequer in Palmerston's Ministry, and Disraeli, the Leader of the Opposition. After dinner the conversation was general; but Bismarck drew Disraeli aside and talked with him for about half an hour. Later on in the evening Disraeli went up to one of the Ambassador's guests—Prince Sabonoff, who was then Secretary to the Russian Embassy in London, and was one day to be Ambassador of Russia to

Bismarck

Constantinople. It is to Sabonoff that we owe the knowledge of Disraeli's words.

"What an extraordinary man Bismarck is!" said the future Earl of Beaconsfield. "He meets me this evening for the first time and tells me all he is going to do. He will attack Denmark so as to seize Slesvig-Holstein; he will turn Austria out of the Germanic Confederation, and then he will attack France. What an extraordinary man!"

This conversation took place precisely in 1862, at a time when Bismarck was not yet a member of the Prussian Cabinet. Two years later, in 1864, came its first application, the war with Denmark; four years later, in 1866, came the second, the war against Austria; eight years later, in 1870, came the third, the war against France.

There was never anything of the nature of improvisation in Bismarck's policy; it was always the result of plans long studied, deeply matured. All that he did he had fully intended; there was purpose in all his actions.

In the month of September 1868 a *pronunciamento* overthrew the throne of the Queen of Spain, Isabella II. One of the authors

**The Hohen-
zollern
candidature**

of this military revolution, General Prim, quickly perceived that it is often easier to destroy than to reconstruct. He set forth to seek a King for his compatriots, who, in spite of everything, kept their preference for a monarchical system. Several names were brought forward; one of them was that of Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen. Nothing seemed to

point to this German Princeling, then about thirty-five years old, as being likely to give happiness to the Spaniards ; all that he had in common with them was the Catholic religion, nothing more. But he bore a name which for the last few years had made a great noise in Europe : he was the cousin of the victor of Sadowa ; his younger brother, Charles, had become Prince of Roumania in 1867.

It is difficult to tell the exact origin of this Hohenzollern candidature. Did it come from Germany by one of the thousand channels of secret diplomacy which Bismarck kept up almost everywhere ? Was it born in Spain by means of politicians who wanted to pay court to Berlin ? Two things are certain : at the beginning of 1869 Bismarck sent a professional diplomat, Theodore von Bernhardt, who was entirely in his confidence, to Madrid on a mission the secrecy of which was carefully kept ; secondly, on the 26th of April, 1869, the *Augsburg Gazette* published an article on Prince Leopold's candidature which, without doubt, was inspired by the Wilhelmstrasse.

The Marquis de la Valette, who was then French Minister of Foreign Affairs, directed the Ambassador, Benedetti, to ask the Chancellor for an explanation ; the latter had probably already taken towards him the attitude he takes up in "Thoughts and Memories"—that he considered the question "as a Spanish question, and not a German one" ; and again, that he was "indifferent enough to the whole question."

On the 11th of May, 1869, he told Benedetti that

there were many reasons why Prince Leopold should refuse "an ephemeral sovereignty." In reporting this conversation to Paris, Benedetti politely added : " I am inclined to think that Count Bismarck did not express all he thought."

Perhaps the person least impressed by this dynastic candidature was the candidate himself, to whom Bismarck was secretly giving his support. After a whole series of secret negotiations and tergiversations which lasted weeks and months, in April 1870 Leopold made up his mind to renounce entirely the candidature for the throne of Spain.

But Bismarck had his reasons for clinging to the Hohenzollern candidature ; war with France was a fixed idea with him. Had he not written, in May 1848, that he would have understood the German revolution, " if the first impulse of the unity of German strength had been to tear Alsace from France and plant the German flag on the cathedral of Strasburg " ?

Since then, his innate hatred of France had added to the conviction that the work begun in 1864, and continued in 1866, would not be completed until the day when France, in her turn, had been vanquished.

" I did not doubt," he says, " that there must be a Franco-German War before the general organization of Germany could be realized."

Napoleon's intervention after Sadowa, mild and impotent as it was, had had the effect of provoking him to a lively fit of ill-temper. " Louis will pay dear for it," he said. The moment seemed to him

to have come to settle once for all the accounts with France, and to complete the German edifice. The Hohenzollern candidature, if one knew how to play the game, would be a certain cause of discord.

In April 1870, Prince Leopold had made it known that he definitively renounced the throne of Spain ; in June he declared that he was ready to accept it. What had happened in the interval ? Bismarck had sent a note to the Prince and his father "urgently" advising them to maintain the candidature "in the interest of Germany" ; and the Prince had consented.

At once Lothar Bucher, an ancient turncoat from the Republican party of 1848, who for some years had been one of the highest officials of the Foreign Office and one of Bismarck's assistants, started for Spain ; he had already been there once on the same business of which he knew all the ins and outs. At the same time, a Spanish Deputy, Salazar Mazzaredo, who had been one of the promoters of the Hohenzollern candidature from 1869, went to Sigmaringen, Prince Leopold's residence, intending to overcome the Prince's last waverings, if he still felt any.

These comings and goings had, up to now, let only a part of the truth transpire ; on the 3rd of July it burst forth wholly. A telegram from the Havas Agency, reproduced in the newspapers, made it known that Prince Leopold had officially agreed to be King of Spain.

At once excitement reigned in the minds of the French ; after the Luxemburg business, the Spanish affair was a fresh defiance of the French.

Bismarck

Since the 2nd of January, the Minister, Emile Ollivier, had inaugurated the system called the Liberal Empire ; the portfolio of Foreign Affairs was then held by the Duc de Gramont, who, in May, had succeeded Comte Daru.

At once, on the 3rd of July itself, Gramont telegraphed to M. Le Sourd, who was in charge of the French Embassy at Berlin in the temporary absence of Benedetti, asking for explanations from the Wilhelmstrasse. Bismarck was not in Berlin. The official who received M. Le Sourd in his place told him that the Prussian Government knew nothing of the affair ; it concerned Spain, and General Prim was the person to address. Forty-eight hours later, on the 6th of July, Gramont made a warlike declaration from the tribune of the Corps Législatif ; he said he was ready to fulfil his "duty without hesitation or weakness." On the 7th he telegraphed to Benedetti, who was at Wildbad, to go to Ems, where William I was taking his annual cure, and to obtain from him, as Head of the Family, the disavowal of the Hohenzollern candidature.

When, much later, he wrote his "Thoughts and Memories," Bismarck insisted on the conciliatory disposition his master had shown under these circumstances. For this he gives two reasons : the King was seventy-three years old ; he could not look without uneasiness on a war which might discredit his laurels of 1866 ; on the other hand, he was under the influence of the Queen, who, with "her want of

**William I
at Ems**

national sentiment," had begged him with tears to avoid war, remembering Jena and Tilsit.

Does this deserve to be entirely believed? Did not Bismarck see two kinds of advantage in representing things after this fashion? The advantage of once more speaking ill of a woman whose vexatious influence he had never ceased asserting, and the advantage of keeping for himself—evil genius—the whole merit of the rupture by throwing William's part into the shade.

But it does not do, in this or other matters, to reduce so greatly the rôle of the King of Prussia; nothing Bismarck did in this business was unknown to his master; and when Bismarck took upon himself the dealing, after his own diabolical fashion, with the Ems telegram, the King made no objection to his Minister nor addressed any reproach to him. The least that can be said of William I is that his moral complicity is always to be found at the bottom of these Machiavellian plots. As Henri Bergson has said recently, with acute penetration: "His state of mind must have been that of the complaisant husband who asks nothing but to let the household reap the benefit of a certain situation, but who would be seized with an almost sincere scruple if he could no longer be deemed to know nothing about it."

Let us return to the measures Benedetti had been ordered to take with the King. He was received at Ems on the 9th of July. To Benedetti's words the King replied that the matter depended not on him, but on his cousin; he would ask him once more

to renounce it. On the 12th of July a telegram arrived from Sigmaringen : Prince Leopold complied with his wish, and gave up definitively. The King communicated the joyful news to Benedetti, and wrote to Queen Augusta : " It is a stone lifted from my breast."

Neither did Napoleon III conceal his satisfaction. He said : " The island which had suddenly risen from the sea is covered afresh by the waters ; there is no further motive for war."

Alas ! the mad recklessness of Gramont and the unscrupulous perfidy of Bismarck had still to be counted with. La Bruyère said : " There are only two ways of raising oneself in the world—our own ingenuity or the imbecility of others."

At this moment Bismarck held both these trumps in his hand.

But, not content with the definitive renunciation of Prince Leopold, Gramont took upon himself, on the evening of the 12th of July, to telegraph fresh instructions to Benedetti :

" In order," he said, " that this renunciation should produce its full effect, it would seem necessary that the King of Prussia should associate himself with it, and assure us that he will not again authorize this candidature."

Benedetti received this telegram in the night, and a few hours later, on the morning of the 13th of July, he accosted William in a walk in the Park of Ems. With caution, he told him of the difficult mission entrusted to him. The King was surprised. " I assure you," he said, " that I have no hidden

plan. This affair has worried me too greatly that I should be tempted to let it arise again. But truly it is impossible for me to go as far as you wish."

During the day the King ordered his aide-de-camp, Prince Radziwill, to communicate to Benedetti the official letter of renunciation he had just received from Sigmaringen, and to tell him that he looked upon the affair as finished.

The Ambassador insisted on having another audience. The King replied, through Radziwill, that he refused to enter into another discussion: "What he had said in the morning was his last word in this affair; the Comte [Benedetti] might rely entirely on his words."

Radziwill added that his master, who was leaving the next day, authorized Benedetti to come and take leave of him when he left.

Such are the events that took place at Ems on that historic day of the 13th of July. The relations between the King and the Ambassador had been marked by perfect correctness; no one had been insulted, and Benedetti never complained of an insult.

In the course of the afternoon, the Counsellor of Legation, Abeken, who accompanied the King, was ordered to send to Bismarck at Berlin a telegram relating all the incidents since the morning.

The Chancellor had left Berlin for his estate in Pomerania at the beginning of June. At Varzin

he was, as it were, behind the scenes; he could follow and inspire events without being seen or discovering himself.

He heard of Gramont's bellicose declaration of

**The Ems
Telegram**

Bismarck

the 6th of July, and at once told his faithful Maurice Busch, the *Pressreferent*, to get articles into the papers against the threats and provocations of the French Cabinet. At the same time he sent telegram after telegram to William I to prevent any concession on his part. The thing was working out admirably ; it must not be allowed to miscarry at the last moment. On the 12th of July Bismarck left Varzin to get into touch again with his friends Roon and Moltke.

“ As I went by Wassaw,” he says, “ my friend, the old Pastor Mulert, was standing at the door of the Presbytery and nodded to me in a friendly way. Sitting in my open carriage, I answered with a gesture that meant a fencing bout, and he understood that I believed I was leaving for war.”

Arriving, at Berlin on the evening of the 12th, the Chancellor learnt that the Hohenzollern candidature was definitively given up

Under the lash of deception and anger, he sent the King his resignation both as President of the Council and Chancellor. William replied by calling him to Ems ; but he was determined to stay in Berlin. “ If I go to Ems,” he thought, “ everything will go to wrack and ruin. In the most favourable case, we shall arrive only at an unsatisfactory compromise, and then the only possible solution, the only honourable solution, the only great solution, will escape us.”

On the 13th of July telegrams were exchanged between Ems and the Wilhelmstrasse. “ Fortunately,” he says, “ the French, short-sighted and

arrogant, at this moment did all they could to get the cart into the mud again."

He was informed of a demand of the Émile Ollivier Cabinet which joined in the proceedings of Benedetti: the King was asked to address a personal letter to Napoleon III, saying that it had never been his intention "to do anything against the interests or dignity of the French nation."

Bismarck telegraphed: "It is impossible to sign."

That evening Bismarck received at his table his friends Roon and Moltke, and they all three talked over what had happened at Ems that morning and the day before. The Chancellor kept on speaking of his intention of retiring. During dinner he was given the telegram Abeken had sent from the King at Ems in the afternoon; it was a long despatch—two hundred and thirty words—in which the incidents concerning Benedetti's proceedings were reported in correct diplomatic style.

"I read it aloud, and Moltke's face changed abruptly; his body bent; he looked old, broken and infirm. The telegram made it clear that his Majesty was yielding to the pretensions of France. My guests were so cast down that they forgot to eat or drink." As for himself, he was thinking what would become of Prussia in face of the Germanic body. The "resolute and valiant policy" of Prussia had for its rules of conduct—they must be again quoted—"reason and loyalty," from these came the "aureole" that surrounded her. "This aureole would be irrevocably lost, or at least for a long time, if, in a question of national honour, an idea were to

Bismarck

spread among the people that the insult of France, 'Prussia is afraid,' were really justified."

The end of Abeken's telegram left the Chancellor the burden of deciding if the events at Ems ought to be communicated to the Press. Bismarck grasped at once the effect that could be obtained; the question was to draw up a new telegram wherein only one fact would be put in evidence—the refusal of the King to receive the French Ambassador again—in such a fashion as to give this fact the character of an insult addressed to France. It would be war without doubt, but was victory certain?

Bismarck turned to his two friends: "We are ready?" "We are ready," answered Roon and Moltke.

Bismarck was waiting only for this categorical affirmation. He sat down at a little table standing near, re-read Abeken's telegram, erased several passages, and "condensed" the two hundred and thirty words into a hundred, which announced without being followed by any explanatory commentary, that "His Majesty had refused to receive the Ambassador again and had let him know through the aide-de-camp that he had nothing more to communicate to him."

Then he held out the new telegram, thus "condensed," to Moltke and Roon, and asked them: "Well, like this, how does it do?"

"Ah! like that," they exclaimed, "it's perfection."

Moltke seemed to grow visibly taller and younger;

at last he had got his war, the war for which he had prepared in a military sense with the same tenacity as Bismarck from the political point of view. The Chief of Staff could not contain himself for joy. "That's a quite different sound now," he said; "one might have thought at first it was to sound a parley; but now it's like a flourish of trumpets in answer to a challenge."

The two guests had undergone a visible transformation.

"All at once," relates Bismarck, "they had regained the wish to eat and drink and were talking in a joyous fashion. Roon was saying: 'The God of the ancient days [it is the good old God, dear to William II] still lives, and will not allow us to succumb shamefully.'" Moltke emerged from his cold passivity, and forgot his usual circumspection in talk so far as to say, while he looked merrily at the ceiling and struck his breast with his hand: "If it is given to me to live long enough to lead our armies in such a war, let the devil carry off this old carcass immediately afterwards."

The same evening, the text of the Ems telegram, that is to say, the text of the telegram faked by Bismarck, was sent to the Press and the Agencies. On the 14th of July all Europe knew of it. In Paris and Berlin it was like the explosion of a bomb. Bismarck had foreseen it clearly; it "was like a red rag to the Gallic bull." Crowds filled the Boulevards crying, "À Berlin! à Berlin!" Could there be any hesitation when William had voluntarily given France a slap in the face, so to speak?

Bismarck

At Berlin there was the same excitement from the opposite point of view. Bismarck, Roon and Moltke had gone with the Crown-Prince to Brandenburg to meet the King, who was to return to the capital that same day. As the royal carriage travelled towards Berlin, Bismarck explained to his master what he had done: the King approved. There had been a question of assembling the Council the next day for the mobilization; but on their arrival at Berlin the King and his Councillors heard of the military preparations of the Émile Ollivier Cabinet.

William asked Roon if the entire Army could be mobilized. "Yes, your Majesty," answered the Minister unhesitatingly; "everything is in readiness; there is no difficulty about it."

That very hour mobilization was decided on, and the Crown-Prince in person announced the news to the crowd.

Then was sung the "*Wacht am Rhein*" amid frantic cries of: "Long live the King! Down with France!"

Events hastened on. On the 15th of July the Corps Législatif, in spite of the opposition of Thiers and several Deputies, voted a credit of fifty millions asked for by Ollivier. On the 19th of July Bismarck went to the Reichstag.

"I announce to the High Assembly," he said, "that to-day the French Chargé d'Affaires has sent us the declaration of war."

The forger of the Ems telegram had attained his end; he had got the war he wanted for grouping

round Prussia all the German States, and he had got it under the conditions he had wished ; for, from the moment when France took upon herself the breaking of the peace, Prussia found she had the right of legitimate defence.

Here, then, was the last issue of a cleverly contrived lie. Still, it must be added that the false telegram of Ems was but the spark which set fire to a powder-mill full to the brim.

The war between France and Prussia had not the character of a surprise ; Prévost-Paradol had already spoken of it in 1868, in *La France nouvelle*, as of imminent certainty. But that does not alter the fact that, at the outset of the war of 1870, there was the fabrication and use of a falsehood, as at the outset of the war of 1914 there was the theory of the Scrap of Paper.

Natum mendacio genus (A race born for lying). This testimony of infamy dates from the first century of our era ; in the nineteenth century, in the twentieth century, it still remains an expression of the truth.

Bismarck left Berlin for France on the 31st of July, at the same time as the King. He left quite at ease ; the Reichstag, before separating,

**The question
of Strasburg
and Metz**

had voted the hundred and twenty million thalers Government had asked for ; the Southern States had mobilized their troops and joined them to those of the Confederation ; on the 25th of July the *Times* had published a plan of alliance between France and Prussia which, in August 1866, Benedetti had

Bismarck

imprudently left in Bismarck's hands, in which there was talk of the possible acquisition of Belgium by France.

France at Antwerp—what a terror to England ! It was not England that was going to intervene for France, nor Russia, nor Austria, nor Italy ; France was therefore to remain with no Allies. As for Prussia, she needed none ; the superiority of her military preparations was almost a warrant of her certain success.

The Chancellor followed the war of 1870 more or less as a spectator ; for here the chief rôle was resumed by the men of war, and the Staffs, remembering his interference in the campaign of 1866, this time kept him in the background as much as possible.

In the train that took him to Cologne he had heard General von Podbielski, while talking with Roon, congratulating himself because precautions had been taken to exclude him from military deliberations ; whereupon he developed a feeling of ill-temper against the generals that he took no pains to conceal.

As for himself, what he wanted above all was to impress public opinion with the objects of the German war. He told Busch to spread abroad his ideas in the Press, such as he had expressed in a conversation at Pont-à-Mousson on the 22nd of August. " A pecuniary indemnity would only weaken France temporarily ; what we demand is prolonged security for our frontiers ; and we shall obtain that only by changing the two fortresses

which are a menace to us into our own protecting ramparts. Strasburg and Metz must cease to be points of attack for France and become places of defence for Germany."

On the 29th of August, at Clermont-en-Argonne, he said to the Correspondent of an English newspaper : " We ought to take and to keep Strasburg, and also Metz, if our arms are victorious. Strasburg will be our Gibraltar. You tell me that France will hate us horribly if we take Alsace and Lorraine from her, and that she will always seek to revenge herself. I grant it ; but it is certain that the French are already furious enough to seek to revenge themselves in any possible manner. The best we can do in the interests of peace is, therefore, to take away from them the power of doing ill. . . . Although there is no advantage to us in annexing Alsace and Lorraine, we must first of all provide against an attack of the French."

The Professors beyond the Rhine invented too late the doctrine of historical rights over our eastern provinces ; in their schools and universities they have taught that the real limits of France are those of the Treaty of Verdun, the Treaty of 845, and that what is beyond these is part of the " German lands in foreign parts " (*Deutsche Aussenländer*).

When he heard these theories, over which he must have shrugged his shoulders, Bismarck must have thought of his teacher, Frederick II, at the time when the latter was entering Austrian Silesia like a thief : " I take first ; I shall always find pedants to establish my rights."

Bismarck

But as for Bismarck, anyhow at this date, he was more frank ; if he took French territory, it was simply for military reasons, just as, later on, in the Reichstag, he has cynically to explain—still à propos of Alsace and Lorraine—his theory of the “glacis.”

As early as the 14th of August, that is, when scarcely a week had passed since the Battle of Woerth, while Strasburg and Metz were still intact, an order from the Cabinet, dated from the general Headquarters at Herny (Department of the Moselle) and completed eight days later at Pont-à-Mousson by a letter from the King of Prussia to Bismarck, established the general government of Alsace-Lorraine. A cousin of the Chancellor, Count Frederick von Bismarck-Bohlen, was appointed Governor-General. The territory assigned her on the map comprised already—from the 14th of August—all that part of France, with the exception of Belfort, which was to be torn from her by the Treaty of Frankfort.

The King and the Chancellor had entered France by Forbach. After passing through Gravelotte, Pont-à-Mousson, and Commercy, they were going towards Paris when Moltke abruptly altered the marching-orders of the Armies. He had just heard that MacMahon was trying to bear to the north-east, to the relief of Bazaine, who had shut himself up in Metz. On the 27th of August Bismarck wrote to his wife: “MacMahon has escaped us by Reims ; he made a *double*, as is said in hunting, and we are trying

to cut him off by pursuing him and forcing him to give battle."

On the 30th of August the Chancellor was present at the Battle of Beaumont, which was, as it were, the preface to the surrounding of the French. The German armies were close on the heels of MacMahon's troops, which flowed back towards Sedan, but with the intention of stealing into Mézières. They were too late, and on the 1st of September the great battle took place.

From the hillock of La Marfée, in the village of Frénois, on the south-west, and at the threshold of Sedan, Bismarck, standing beside the King, Roon and Moltke, followed its vicissitudes, field-glass in hand; but he felt like a spectator who knows the play will end well, and who is ignorant only of the moment when the curtain will fall. On the right, the eastern side, he had seen the savage resistance and the fire at Bazeilles; in front of him, on the northern side, he had seen the two jaws of the German armies close at the Calvary of Illy, and the French army caught in a terrible net of fire and steel; he had seen the French cavalry dash forward in violent charges, facing the west, and against the foot-soldiers and gunners of the XIth and the Vth Prussian Corps; he had heard King William hailing the heroism of those squadrons, charging, falling back, charging again with untiring fury, with a cry of admiration: "Oh! the fine fellows!"

About three o'clock in the afternoon the tragedy was nearing its end; the white flag was floating

from the turret of the town. Then William sent to the army and to the town a summons to surrender. At the close of day a French envoy, General Reille, arrived, bringing the letter in which Napoleon III delivered up his sword to the hands of the victor.

The spectators on La Marfée dispersed then, Bismarck and Moltke went to Donchery, about five kilomètres from Sedan, and the Commander-in-Chief of the vanquished army, Wimpffen, came to meet them in this small town to discuss the fate of his unfortunate soldiers. The discussion between the three men lasted until past midnight. In his cold, peremptory voice, Moltke at once laid down his conditions: the entire army was to be made prisoners of war. Wimpffen, in a trembling voice, strove against this; he failed to obtain the smallest mitigation. Several times Bismarck interposed to enforce his friend, the general's, words.

"It was France," he said, "that declared war; Germany desires the prompt re-establishment of peace. We ought not, therefore, to neglect any means of shortening the duration of the struggle, and one of the most efficacious is to deprive France of an important army. Therefore, after having deliberated on the matter, we have decided that these should be our conditions: Your army will lay down its arms and be sent prisoners to Germany."

Still, he persuaded Moltke to consent to the prolongation of the armistice till nine o'clock the next morning; no ill consequence could result from

this, since the French army was surrounded on all sides.

A few hours later, about six o'clock in the evening, Bismarck was awakened in order to inform him that Napoleon III wished to see him. He dressed in haste and started on horseback for Sedan. As was his custom during the war, he wore his military costume—the undress tunic of the Yellow Regiment of the Heavy Cavalry of the Landwehr, the white cap, and the big top-boots.

At about three kilomètres distance, near Frénois, he met the Imperial landau. Alone in the presence of the Emperor and the officers with him, he instinctively felt for his revolver. Napoleon saw the action, but Bismarck resumed a correct demeanour and gave the military salute. A short conversation took place. The Emperor wished to see the King ; Bismarck replied that the King was too far off : in reality he did not want Napoleon to see his master until all the conditions of the capitulation had been signed. Then, where was one to wait ? For the Emperor would not return to Sedan. Then, all together, they took the road back to Donchery. Shortly before reaching it, Napoleon and Bismarck stopped at the small house of an artisan by the roadside.

Together they went up a wretched staircase into a mean room on the first floor where a deal table and two armchairs were all the furniture. What a contrast with their last interview at the Tuileries ! They were alone, and for about three-quarters of an hour they talked.

Napoleon deplored this fatal war ; he had not wished for it ; it had been forced upon him by the pressure of public opinion. Bismarck answered that neither in Germany had any one desired war ; the Hohenzollern Candidature concerned Spain, and not Germany. The Emperor spoke of obtaining less hard conditions for the Army of Sedan. The Chancellor alleged that this was a question purely in the province of the military. Then Moltke appeared for a moment and declared that nothing of the conditions named to Wimpffen could be altered ; he would go to refer them to the King. Napoleon said that, being a prisoner, he could not himself treat of peace ; the Government of Paris alone could do so.

The conversation continued in the garden, and then the Emperor was conducted to the Château de Belfort. It was there that, at noon, the capitulation was signed, and afterwards, at the same place, there was a short interview between William I and Napoleon III. On leaving this interview the Emperor again spoke to Bismarck, and they saluted each other for the last time.

The next day, the 3rd of September, William received at his table at Headquarters the three men who had prepared for this brilliant triumph of Prussian arms and policy ; at the close of the repast he drank to them in these terms :

“ To you, Minister Roon, who sharpened the sword ; to you, General von Moltke, who used it ; to you, Count Bismarck, who have brought to its present height Prussian policy by directing it for long years.”

The victors of Sedan had started at once for Paris ; the General Staff and Bismarck stayed for some days at Reims. There must not be left any doubt in the minds of the members of the new Government in Paris of Germany's aims which the victory of Sedan seemed to have brought much nearer.

Therefore the Chancellor addressed a circular, in which the question of Strasburg and Metz was set forth anew, to all his diplomatic agents.

It said : " While France remains in possession of Strasburg and Metz, her offensive organization will be stronger than our defensive on the south of Germany, and on the left bank of the Rhine. In the hands of France, Strasburg is a side-door always open upon Southern Germany ; in the hands of Germany, on the contrary, Strasburg and Metz acquire a defensive character."

The greatest publicity was given in the German Press to this official circular.

Still, while preparing for a war *à outrance*, the Government of National Defence thought it its duty to enter into relations with the victor, to whom they addressed the appeal that he was making war on Napoleon III, and not on France ; did not the fall of the Emperor now permit of talk of an armistice while awaiting peace ?

The unhappy mission of conferring with Bismarck fell to Jules Favre.

Both physically and morally no two men could have been more dissimilar than these : Bismarck then fifty-five years old, Jules Favre sixty-one ;

Bismarck

the one enormous, built like a colossus, in his cuirassier's uniform, affecting a military stiffness ; dry and cold in speech ; champion of brute force ; proud of the ascendancy given to him by six weeks of brilliant victories and the investment of Paris ; the other, slender, delicate, of refined bearing, inconspicuous in his civilian dress, speaking with the emotion of an advocate pleading a noble cause, believing in humanity, justice and right.

His own conviction alone sustained him ; for what did he represent ? A Government which was scarce fifteen days old, and a conquered country. But this country was France, the cause was a beautiful one to plead, and he pleaded it with his whole soul. How was it possible they should understand each other ? Jules Favre spoke in the name of sentiment ; in Bismarck's policy, that policy of realities, there was never a place for sentiment.

Between Jules Favre and Bismarck there were three interviews, on the 19th and the 20th of September ; the first at the Château de la Haute-Maison, the two others in the Château de Ferrières, belonging to Baron Rothschild. Bismarck knew Ferrières ; he had hunted there in 1865.

Jules Favre asked for an armistice for the convocation of an Assembly with which Prussia could treat. Bismarck would hear nothing of an armistice at any price. He spoke of Alsace : " Strasburg is a perpetual menace to us. It is the key of our house, and we want it."

During the last interview Bismarck consented to say on what conditions an armistice might be

granted. Germany would occupy all the Vosges fortresses, and Mont Valérien at the gates of Paris ; the elections for a National Assembly were not to take place either in Alsace or in the part of Lorraine Germany kept for herself.

Jules Favre was profoundly moved ; his eyes filled with tears ; according to Bismarck, who was incapable of understanding such emotion, Jules Favre was " simply playing a part."

Two days later, a letter from Jules Favre informed the Chancellor that France could not agree to the conditions demanded of her for an armistice.

The interviews at Ferrières had been in French, because, as Bismarck told Jules Favre, they had no official character. He added : " On the day when we sign the Treaty of Peace, you'll see we shall speak German."

On the 5th of October the German Headquarters were established at Versailles ; Bismarck installed

At Versailles himself in the house of Mme Jessé, 24, Rue de Provence ; it was his residence for five months up to the beginning of the month of March. He turned this house into a sort of branch of the Wilhelmstrasse, having with him his confidential assistants, Abeken, Keudell, Lothar Bucher, and Maurice Busch. He kept up his usual way of life, getting up late, but working in his study till far on in the night. Great eater and drinker as he was, he lived in abundance at Versailles. Presents of eatables came to him from all parts of Germany—hampers of game, pheasants,

Bismarck

fish, monumental pieces of pastry, bottles of beer and wine, dainties of all sorts.

But the Parisians were dying of cold and hunger.

The drawing-room of the Jessé house witnessed a constant stream of politicians ; at times they heard the sternest of speeches, such as Bismarck made one day to the Mayor of Versailles :

“ Germany wants peace, and will make war until she obtains it, whatsoever may be the deplorable consequences for humanity ; should France even disappear, like Carthage and other ancient nations.”

The Constitution of the German Empire, the Capitulation of Paris, the preliminaries of peace, were all signed in that historic room. On the table there was a clock surmounted by a head of Satan ; this diabolical figure presided over all these events. It seems Bismarck did not take it away with him when he departed.

While he was staying at the Château de Ferrières Bismarck had received an ambiguous personage called Régnier, who introduced himself as an emissary of the Empress and attempted for some time to play the part of intermediary between the Prussian Headquarters and the Army of Metz. At Versailles the Chancellor saw a personage of another sort appear—General Boyer, Chief Aide-de-camp to Bazaine, who engaged him in diplomatic discussions which came to no end ; for it was a question of the Army of Metz being “ still the Army of the Empire, resolved to support the Government of the Regent.” But this took days, and during those days Metz was dying of hunger. Since

the day of St. Privat, Frederick-Charles had strictly blockaded the capital of Lorraine. From Versailles Bismarck followed and hastened the agony of the heroic city. On the 27th of October Bazaine gave up to Germany Metz la Pucelle and an intact army of a hundred and seventy-five thousand men.

Shortly afterwards, under these desperate circumstances, on the 21st of November, Thiers presented himself at the house in the Rue de Provence.

Bismarck has written with singular *sans-gêne* of this good servant of his country. "He is," he says, "an amiable and clever man, witty and brilliant; but he's not a diplomatist; he's too sentimental. He is incontestably more shrewd than Jules Favre, but he, too, lets himself be too easily bluffed. I can pump him as much as I like. And then he has a regrettable folly—he drags out the negotiations with which he is charged by introducing matters that have nothing to do with them."

The future liberator of the land came to beg for an armistice which would allow of the convocation of a National Assembly with which the question of peace could be discussed.

The negotiations between Thiers and Bismarck lasted five days, and were without result. As at the Ferrières interview, the Chancellor had again spoken of the occupation of one of the Paris forts; he would not permit the election in Alsace and Lorraine, nor authorize the revictualling of Paris. Thiers debated these conditions inch by inch; the

only alternative he could obtain was either the armistice without revictualling, or the election without the armistice.

The Government of National Defence directed Thiers to break off negotiations which had no result.

During the course of the Siege of Paris Bismarck's diplomacy was suddenly drawn to affairs in the East. On the 31st of October **The question of the Black Sea** the Chancellor Gortschakoff addressed a circular letter to the Signatory Powers of the Treaty of 1856, asking for the revision of the articles which limited the Russian forces on the Black Sea. In London and Vienna there was a lively sense of ill-humour ; in Paris there were other things to do than to utter a Platonic protest. Bismarck remembered that the part Prussia had played in the Polish insurrection of 1865 had won him the friendship of Russia, and that this friendship had left him elbow room in the war of 1866 and in the present war. Therefore it was to his interest to husband this precious friendship ; all the more because the question of the Black Sea had then but very distant relations with the policy of Prussia.

He proposed to refer the question to an International Conference ; Russia very willingly agreed, and England and Austria consented. The Conference opened in London on the 17th of January, at a time when France was unable to take part in it. The Convention of London of the 14th of March, 1871, gave Russia entire liberty of action on the Black Sea. Bismarck and Gortschakoff had each,

about the same time, carried through an excellent transaction, one concerning Strasburg and Metz, the other Sebastopol.

But Bismarck, in his house at Versailles, was pursuing, with untiring tenacity, the transformation of the Confederation of Northern Germany into an Empire comprising all the German States. To overcome the final hesitation of some of the German States, what could be better than to crush France, if not by taking Paris (from a military point of view this operation seemed impossible), at least by destroying her?

The Chancellor was one of those who were exasperated by the resistance of Paris. He shared the sentiments of his wife, who was "always filled," he said, "with a rabid hatred of the French, all of whom, down to the little children, she would like to see shot and cut to pieces."

Early in November she wrote to him :

"I am going soon to send you the Book of Psalms, so that you may read the prophecy against the French. 'I say unto you the impious must be exterminated.'"

After the rupture of negotiations at the beginning of November, the question of the bombardment of Paris came up perpetually in the Chancellor's conversations.

"I know," he said, "that several papers make me responsible for Paris not being yet bombarded. It is absurd. . . . From the first I asked that the capital should be destroyed from top to bottom. But the military authorities are for ever shuffling.

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I spend my time in overcoming their scruples, and they spend theirs in making preparations and begging for an increase of munitions."

He spoke to the King on the matter, who declared that he had given the order to the generals. "But I understood at once," added Bismarck, "that this was not true. I know him. He doesn't know how to lie, or, anyhow, how to set about it."

Behind these delays in beginning the bombardment Bismarck guessed at the influence of a feminine cabal :

"It is the Queen of England," he said, "who does not wish Paris to be bombarded. She has influenced her daughter, the Princess Royal, who, in her turn, has influenced her husband, the Crown-Prince."

One day, when Bismarck wanted to speak of the bombardment to the Crown-Prince, the latter stopped him with these words : "I should prefer giving up my command."

The Chancellor was on the point of answering : "I am ready to take it. I should give but one order ; it would be : Begin the bombardment."

On the 27th of December Bismarck's diabolical wishes were granted : the bombardment began. On the 12th of January it was reported at Versailles that Paris was on fire ; great columns of smoke on the horizon could be seen over the capital. "That's not enough," said the Chancellor ; "we ought to be able to smell the reek here."

Bismarck's sense of smell was like that of Vitellius, who on the field of battle of Bedriacum said that the

corpse of an enemy always smelled good. On the afternoon of the 2nd of September, when visiting the battle-field of Sedan, passing Bazeilles, he had smelt with a mixture of disgust and pleasure a strong smell of burnt onions, and had said: "Faugh, those burning Frenchmen!"

The first shells of the bombardment fell on the Avron plateau; on the 5th of January they began to fall on the town itself; the Pantheon, the Val-de-Grâce, the Museum, served as targets to the German batteries. Then Bismarck's delight broke forth. "At last they have begun to fire!" he wrote to his wife in a cry of savage joy.

On the 19th of January, the day after the proclamation at Versailles of the German Empire, the garrison of Paris had made a supreme effort on the side of Montretout and Buzenval; they had been unable to get through and had left on the battle-field twelve hundred dead and four thousand wounded. Trochu sent to ask for an armistice of forty-eight hours to carry away the wounded and bury the dead. Bismarck sent a refusal: "And besides," he added, "the dead are just as comfortable above the ground as underneath it."

Jules Favre presented himself at the Chancellor's house at seven o'clock in the evening of the 25th of January. "He has grown paler and

**The armistice
of the 28th
of January**

stouter," said Bismarck to a confidant; "it is no doubt the effect of eating horse-flesh." The conversation between the two men lasted over two and a half hours. Then Bismarck went to William and talked with him for

Bismarck

three-quarters of an hour, coming back afterwards to his intimates in the dining-room. He was radiant, and, turning to his cousin, Count Bismarck-Bohlen :

“ Do you know this ? ” he asked, and he began to whistle the call of the hunter who has brought down a stag.

“ Yes,” said Bohlen ; “ it is the death-signal.”

“ No, not quite that,” and again he whistled. “ But at any rate I believe this time it’s all right.”

Jules Favre had come to treat of the capitulation of Paris. Shells had had no effect on the great city ; but famine had accomplished its death-stroke. Paris, without meat, without coal, had nothing left but surrender.

Jules Favre had said that in Paris one saw ladies taking pretty children to walk on the Boulevard : “ That surprises me,” said the gentle Chancellor ; “ you haven’t eaten them all, then.”

On the 28th of January, after five days of very painful negotiations for Jules Favre and the generals who accompanied him, an armistice of twenty-one days was arranged for the electing and convocation of a National Assembly. As to the Army of the East, the perfidy of Bismarck, who wanted Belfort at any price, fooled Jules Favre’s ignorance by showing him an inaccurate line of demarcation of the armies, so that the entire Army of the East was excluded from the armistice and was obliged to continue its disastrous retreat, and, after worse sufferings, to retire into Swiss territory.

On the eve of the signature, the cannon from

Mont Valérien was heard for the last time : Paris had capitulated.

The National Assembly had met at Bordeaux and had elected Thiers as head of the Executive.

On the 21st of February Thiers went to Versailles to settle the preliminaries of peace. He knew that Bismarck's conditions would be very severe, but he was determined to debate them to the last extremity and to cope with the Chancellor.

Though saying to Thiers that he did not want to "jockey" him, Bismarck laid down his exigent terms: all Alsace, including Belfort, German Lorraine with Metz; an indemnity of six milliard francs; the entry of the German troops into Paris.

The negotiations lasted till the 26th of February. Jules Favre had accompanied Thiers, but it was the latter who bore the whole weight of the discussion.

"No," he said, "I will never give up Belfort and Metz. You wish to ruin France financially, to ruin her on her frontiers. Very well; take her, ravage her, destroy her houses, flay her unoffending inhabitants. We will fight to our last breath; you will have to govern her in the sight of Europe, if it allows you."

Bismarck fell back upon the unalterable conditions of the King and Moltke; but there was one point upon which he himself was determined never to come to terms, which was the acquisition of Lorraine with Metz. Gortschakoff had written to

Bismarck

advise him to leave German Lorraine and Metz to France, and he had answered the Russian Chancellor in these words :

“ We must keep strictly to the programme that, six months ago, we communicated to St. Petersburg. The realization of this programme is indispensable for our security, and Germany would not for one instant tolerate the alteration of even a comma. We must have Metz and Lorraine.”

The discussions between Thiers and Bismarck were at times stormy. One day, at some fresh exaction of the Chancellor's, Thiers started up and exclaimed, “ But that is an insult ! ”

Bismarck went on with the conversation in German.

“ But you know,” said Thiers, “ that I don't know German.”

Bismarck answered in French : “ Why, just now, you spoke of an insult. I found that I did not know enough French, and so I preferred to speak German, in which I understand what I say, and especially what I mean.”

But Bismarck had obtained an indemnity of five milliards and the cession of Metz, so he consented to a compromise.

“ Which do you prefer,” he said suddenly one day, “ Belfort or the renunciation of our entry into Paris ? ”

“ Belfort,” answered Thiers ; “ Paris is ready to drink the cup to the dregs to preserve for the country a corner of her soil and an heroic city.”

The valiant citadel which Denfert-Rochereau had

not ceased defending until the 16th of February, when the order had come to him from the French Government, was preserved for France. The unvanquished defenders of Belfort left the place before the German troops, who presented arms.

Thiers had saved this scrap of Alsatian ground.

And once more, since 1914, the impregnable citadel bars the way of the invader, who, thanks to it, has been unable to penetrate into Burgundy.

The Preliminaries of Peace were signed at Versailles on the 26th of February.

Bismarck then was willing to lay aside for the moment his haughty tone ; he took Thiers' hands and said :

“ I understand and honour your sorrow ; I am the Minister of Prussia, you the Minister of France. I had to do what I have done.”

As early as the 17th of February, before the opening of the negotiations at Versailles, the

**Protest of
the Deputies
of Alsace-
Lorraine**

Deputies of Alsace-Lorraine had, from the tribune at Bordeaux, spoken the solemn protest drawn up by Gambetta,

Deputy of the Bas-Rhin ; it had been read by Émile Keller, Deputy of the Haut-Rhin. Here are a few lines from this most touching document ; the two eastern provinces owe to it that they have kept, as a right, their French character :

“ We call our fellow-citizens of France, the Governments and peoples of the whole world, to witness, that we hold beforehand as null and void all acts or treaties, votes or plébiscites, which may

consent to give over to the foreigner the whole or part of our provinces of Alsace and Lorraine.

“By these presents we proclaim for ever the inviolable right of the Alsatians and Lorrainers to remain members of the French nation, and we swear, for ourselves and our constituents, our children and their descendants, to claim it for evermore and in every way, against all usurpers.”

On the 1st of March the Assembly of Bordeaux, “compelled,” as Thiers said, “to bow its head beneath the power of the foreigners,” ratified the Versailles Preliminaries. Then a Deputy of the Haut-Rhin once more entered a supreme protest.

“Given over, in defiance of all justice and by an odious abuse of strength, to the domination of the foreigner, we have a last duty to perform. Once more we declare null and void a pact which disposes of us without our consent. . . . Your brothers of Alsace and Lorraine, now separated from the common family, will keep for France, absent from their hearthstone, a filial affection until the day when she will come to take up once again her place there.”

The rapidity with which Thiers had made the Assembly ratify the Peace Preliminaries had this fortunate consequence, that the French Government was able to obtain, from the morning of the 3rd of March, the evacuation of Paris. On the 1st William I had reviewed the German troops on the Longchamps race-course. Bismarck was on horseback; there was some hissing as he went by. In the evening he told how he had asked a very disagreeable looking man for a

**The return
to Berlin**

light for his cigar, and that, without a word, the man had held out his cigarette to him.

A solemn entry of the Guard had been arranged for the 3rd of March ; but the night before, after the notice Jules Favre had hastened to give, it had become impossible, and, in fact, it did not take place.

On the 6th of March Bismarck and the great General Staff left Versailles ; on the 9th, after being absent seven months, the victors re-entered Berlin. On the 16th of June, the day of the solemn entry of the German troops into Berlin, there could be seen on the front of the Royal Academy a portrait of Bismarck with this inscription :

“ Forged by fire, cemented with blood, unity is fashioned, braving the storms of time. Master, thou hast kept thy word.” (*Meister, du lösest dein Wort.*)

The Preliminaries of Versailles had now to be turned into a Treaty of Peace. A Franco-German

Conference for this end was opened at
The Treaty of Frankfort Brussels on the 24th of March ; but the

insurrection of the Commune, and the unreasonable demands of Germany, prevented its coming to a decision. Bismarck then decided to treat directly at Frankfort with two plenipotentiaries, Jules Favre and Pouyer-Quertier. The latter, who was then Finance Minister, brought to these final negotiations a practical knowledge of affairs, and a frankness of manner, not to speak of a stomach that could stand Germanic grossness, which helped greatly to settle the final difficulties.

Alas ! nothing of the Preliminaries of the 26th of February could be altered.

The negotiations at Frankfort began at the Swan Hôtel on the 6th of May. Four days were spent in painful discussions ; our Plenipotentiaries had to make some further concessions, notably as to the condition of the payment of the five milliards and of the position of the Alsace-Lorrainers.

The final signatures were exchanged on the 10th of May, 1871.

Bismarck had the right to congratulate himself on the Treaty of Frankfort ; for the deed of violence, which he had had in his mind for so long, had become a reality ; by iron and fire he had torn from France two pieces of her flesh. Nevertheless, how could he doubt the invincible affection the Alsatians and Lorrainers had for France ? Had not these Frenchmen protested, before the whole world, against the violence done to their bodies, to which their hearts would never submit ?

The Chancellor knew well that there would be a difficult time to get through ; he estimated it at about thirty years ; at the end of thirty years, the resignation of the annexed peoples and the assent of France ought to allow Germany to enjoy her brutal conquest in peace.

Those thirty years are long past ; it will soon be a half-century since that iniquitous deed was done. Far from disappearing, the gulf Bismarck made between France and Germany has become deeper and deeper. There is but one way of filling it up—that the crime of 1871 be atoned for. France

did not wish for the present war ; she suffers cruelly from it ; but she endures her sufferings with courage, for she knows that the hour is near, the hour of vengeance and liberation, which, from the cathedrals of Strasburg and Metz, from the belfries of Alsace and Lorraine, will ring in the victory of indefeasible Right.

Then, at last, France will have the joy of being at home.

How eloquently did a venerable orator speak, forty-six years ago, of invaded France, of the happiness of belonging to oneself !

“ And I,” he said, “ who have seen those beautiful fields, those green hills, those charming rivers, formerly the eastern frontiers, and now the land of the stranger ; when I think of the beautiful picture of my own country, as I knew it in my youth, and as it is still with me in dreams, before my eyes ; when I think of the gloom, the encroachments of the enemy, and that the soil is no longer ours, that even there, where it still belongs to us in word, it is forced to suffer the presence of the foreigner,—ah ! Messieurs, it is hard for a man who loves his country !

“ Well ! do you know the cry that then breaks forth from the patriotic heart ? There is but one—vehement as the roar of a lion—it is the cry of deliverance. Let us release our country and be at home ! ”

CHAPTER V

THE GERMAN EMPIRE

The renaissance of the German Empire—The adhesion of Bavaria—The 18th of January, 1871—Prince Bismarck—The interview of the three Emperors—The alarm of 1875—The Congress of Berlin—The Triple Alliance—Manteuffel and Hohenlohe in Alsace-Lorraine—The Schnaebelé affair.

THE victories of Prussia in 1870 did not result only in the theft of two French Provinces ; they had another result which Bismarck had been seeking since 1866—the renaissance of the German Empire. On the 18th of January, in the Galerie des Glaces at Versailles, this was an accomplished fact ; but, before coming to a proclamation of the Empire, the Chancellor had many difficulties to solve.

The Crown-Prince went beyond Bismarck's ideas ; he was a partisan of the national unity of Germany, but in the sense in which it had been understood by the men of 1848 ; that is to say, with really liberal and parliamentary institutions, which would have the effect of putting the nation itself, and not the princes, in the foreground. No doubt, as Bismarck wrote in his contemptuous style, " His Royal Highness had taken the idea from one of the political visionaries to whom he lent an ear."

As for William I, he by no means shared his son's liberalism. He held that the title of King of

Prussia was superior to all others. He understood a Prussia with increased territory ; but he was not anxious to exchange for the title of Emperor that of President of the Confederation which he had borne since 1866.

Bismarck declared that the adoption of the title of Emperor was a political necessity. "Your Majesty," he said to his master, "does not want to remain for ever a neuter noun, *das Präsidium*. There is something abstract about the word 'presidence' ; the name of 'Emperor,' on the contrary, possesses great strength and power."

That might be true, but the Imperial title was unknown in Prussian institutions, and Frederick II had made the name of King of Prussia so powerful that there was no need to change it, even by modifying the territorial form of Germany.

He had also to reckon with the particularism, if not the anti-Prussian sentiments, of the Southern States, especially Bavaria. They had certainly associated their armies with those of Prussia at the beginning of the war and had taken a large part in the common victory ; still, they did not intend to join the Federal Constitution without getting any advantages. King Louis of Bavaria showed himself the most refractory ; yet he was the sovereign it was most necessary to win over because of his preponderant position in Southern Germany. Delbrück, one of Bismarck's best agents, was employed by him in negotiations with the Southern States, which were very knotty. It will be enough here to state the broad results.

Bismarck

On the 2nd of September, the very evening of the capitulation of Sedan, the Grand-Duke of Baden sent a note to Prussia, asking, with the entrance of the Grand-Duchy into the Confederation of the North, the re-establishment of the Imperial title. The ancient title of Emperor, borne by the Hapsburgs, had gone down in the territorial confusion which followed Austerlitz; the new title, restored by the Hohenzollerns, was to be borne as the result of the great victory Germany had just won.

This double request of the Baden Government corresponded with Bismarck's most ardent wishes; but, in public opinion, it perhaps lost something of its worth, because the Grand-Duke Frederick was the son-in-law of the King of Prussia.

More significant was the action of Bavaria. Towards the middle of September the Cabinet at Munich had renewed on its own account the proposals of the Carlsruhe Cabinet, qualified by divers conditions.

At that time Delbrück's diplomacy was very active about the Southern Courts and rendered the greatest services to the cause of unity. At the end of September he wrote: "The German Union is assured."

But the birth of unity still needed many laborious weeks.

The Delegates of Würtemberg, Baden, Bavaria and Hesse arrived at Versailles at the end of October and serious discussions began.

It was a very hard-working period of the Chancellor's stay in the Hôtel in the Rue de Provence. The negotiations with Thiers concerning the

armistice, the negotiations with Russia about the Black Sea, the negotiations with the Delegates of the Princes about the constitution of a new Germany, were conducted simultaneously.

He wrote to his wife, that it was "galley-slave work. My ink-smearers manœuvre and intrigue night and day after the fashion of Frankfort. Unless a German hurricane falls upon them one of these days, we shall arrive at nothing with these diplomats and bureaucrats of the old school, anyhow this year."

The Alsace-Lorraine question awakened envy and jealousy in the Southern States ; to whom was this land torn from France to belong ? To cut short all rivalry, Bismarck engaged that it should belong to no one, no more to Prussia, who, in fact, had conquered it, than to the Grand-Duchy of Baden which, in virtue of its nearness, hoped to annex a portion. It would belong to all, since it was the fruit of a campaign in which all Germans had participated ; under the title of *Reichsland*—that is, The Land of the Empire—it would be the property of the entire new Germany ; the two French Provinces would thus become, as it were, " the keystone of the united work."

During the course of November, Baden, Hesse, and Würtemberg passed Treaties for their entrance into the Confederation, but the great

**The Adhesion
of Bavaria**

success was gained on the 23rd of November. On that day Bismarck had had a lengthy Conference with the three Bavarian Plenipotentiaries ; then the door opened, and he ap-

peared, looking radiant, an empty glass in his hand.

"Gentlemen," he said, "the Treaty with Bavaria is signed; the unity of Germany is assured, and our King becomes the Emperor of Germany. Bring another bottle. . . . It is a great event. The newspapers won't be satisfied; perhaps even the man who writes history will criticize our Treaty. Speaking of me, he will say: 'That idiot ought to have asked for more; he would have got it, because they would have been obliged to give it him.' He who will say that will perhaps be right; but he will not take into account that what I attached the most importance to was that my partners should be pleased with me. Treaties are worth nothing when those who sign them do it under constraint or force." (All comment is superfluous; but it is well to compare this edifying declaration with the memory of the Frankfort Treaties in 1871 and that of Bucharest in 1918.) "As for me, I see that those people have gone away satisfied. I did not try to take them in."

The Crown-Prince was one of those who thought that, under the circumstances, Prussia might have obtained greater advantages from Bavaria.

"That is true," answered the Chancellor. "We might have asked for more, but what should we have done to gain them?" "Well, we could have done it by force." "In that case, Sir, I can only advise your Royal Highness to begin by disarming the Bavarian troops you have under your command."

Contrary to what had taken place in 1849, it was now the Princes who had made German unity; and there was the need to get it ratified, if not by the people, at least by their representatives.

The Reichstag was convoked for this end.

Several Deputies found the conditions under which Würtemberg, and still more Bavaria, entered into the Confederation, or rather the Empire, far from satisfactory; but the astute Delbrück, admirably interpreting his chief's ideas, was able to throw the fullest light on the advantages of the new régime.

A Delegation of thirty Deputies was then sent by the Reichstag from Berlin to Versailles to beg the King of Prussia to accept the Imperial Crown. In 1849 a Delegation of thirty-two Deputies had come from Frankfort to Berlin to Frederick-William IV with the same object. Oddly enough, the Delegation of 1870 had the same President as that of 1849; this was Simson, who was at this time President of the Reichstag as, twenty-one years earlier, he had been President at Frankfort. But the analogy was purely superficial, for, according to a saying of the time, "Between 1849 and 1870 Bismarck, Roon and Moltke had come along."

On the 18th of December the Delegates were received at Versailles in the Great Hall of the Prefecture. Simson was much moved in reading the address, as was William I in reading his speech, which had been composed by Bismarck. All the time the ceremony lasted the firing of the batteries on Mont Valérien could be heard.

Bismarck

Before the arrival of the Reichstag Delegation, Bismarck had achieved his end: he had induced Ludwig II of Bavaria to take the initiative in the matter of the revival of the Empire. He had written to him: "In my opinion, it is of the highest importance that the first suggestion should come from your Majesty and not from the representatives of the people. The situation would be strained if the initiative were not, freely and maturely considered, to be that of the most powerful of the confederated Princes."

In answer, the King of Bavaria consented to forsake his misanthropy for the moment and to forget the embellishment of his castles so far as to address a letter to William I on the 2nd of December.

"I have proposed to the German Princes," he said, "to join with me in asking your Majesty that the exercise of the Presidential Rights of the Confederation be made under the title of German Emperor."

German unity and the Empire were therefore going to be constituted with the character that Bismarck desired above all things to impress upon them: it was the Princes themselves who made themselves the interpreters of Germany's wish for unity.

William had now only to hold out his hand to take the Imperial Crown; but he still hesitated, for his love of Prussia outweighed his love of Germany, and the title of King of Prussia still seemed to him the most beautiful of all. If he

may be believed, he thought for a moment of abdicating and "leaving everything to Fritz."

At last, on the 14th of January, he let it be known that he accepted the new dignity, "with the firm intention of being, by the grace of God, as a German Prince, the faithful protector of all rights, and of holding the sword of Germany for the protection of our country."

The coronation ceremony was fixed for the 18th of January, for that day is the anniversary of a date famous in the history of the Hohenzollern Dynasty. At Königsberg, on the 18th of January, 1701, "the All-powerful Prince Frederick I" had crowned himself and been anointed as King of Prussia, and the Order of the Black Eagle had been instituted to perpetuate the memory of that coronation.

On the eve of the great day the King, the Crown-Prince and Bismarck had a lengthy conversation to settle the final details of the protocol. A serious discussion arose over even the title of the new Emperor ; should it be Emperor of Germany, or German Emperor ?

The title of Emperor of Germany seemed to imply territorial powers ; and for this reason William stood out for it, even to the extent of saying that he would be Emperor of Germany or no Emperor at all. For this same reason Bavaria would not consent to this. Bismarck strove to convince his master that the only suitable title was "German Emperor," *Deutscher Kaiser*, as one said, *Imperator Romanus*.

Bismarck

He held as obstinately to his idea as William did to his.

The Grand-Duke of Baden discovered an ingenious way of getting out of the difficulty the next day at the Proclamation of the Empire : it was to use neither one title nor the other.

On the 18th of January, 1871, the Castle of Versailles witnessed the display of official pomp at the Coronation. In the Hall of Mirrors, that gallery which Mme de Sévigné called a royal beauty unique in the world, beneath the paintings of Le Brun that glorify the triumphs of Louis XIV, an altar was set up in the middle against the windows looking over the park. Round about the altar stood the King, the members of the Royal Family, the Princes, the Officers, the Ministers, all laced up and girded into their Germanic stiffness.

The ceremony began with a religious service ; and then William made a short speech, thanking the " illustrious Princes and Allies," and telling them that, in response to their request, he accepted for himself and his successors the German Imperial dignity. Then Bismarck, who wore the white uniform of the Cuirassiers, read the proclamation addressed by his Majesty to the German people, which said :

" We accept the Imperial dignity in the hope that the German people may be permitted to enjoy the reward of its zealous and heroic struggles in a durable peace, protected by frontiers capable of assuring to the Fatherland, by security against

fresh attacks from France, that of which it has been deprived for centuries."

Finally, the Grand-Duke of Baden, who took the place of the absent King of Bavaria, gave a *hoch!* in honour of the Emperor: "Long live his Imperial Majesty, the Emperor William!"

Those present repeated these words three times, and William walked past all the groups. The ceremony was finished; the Empire was made, but no one knew yet whether his chief was Emperor of Germany or German Emperor.

"His Majesty," relates the Chancellor, "was so greatly put out with me for the way that things had gone that, coming down from the raised platform of the Princes, he pretended not to see me, though I stood alone in the open space in front of the platform; and, passing before me, he went and gave his hand to the generals standing behind me."

The strange attitude of the Emperor with regard to the Chancellor on this solemn occasion could alter nothing in history.

A man had had the determined will to respond to the aspirations for unity of the German people, but to respond in his own way, *igne et ferro*, and giving only formal concessions to popular rights. He had forcibly turned Austria out of Germany's door; from 1866 it was all up with the old dualism; the Hohenzollerns remained alone at the head of the Germanic body. It was now left to give the King of Prussia the prestige of victories that would raise him to the first rank in Europe, and in Ger-

many do away with the last hesitations. The war with France had allowed this end to be reached in unhopèd-for circumstances. Diplomacy had completed the work of victory; all the Princes and States of Germany had grouped themselves around William I and saluted him with the title of Emperor. The artisan of this great work, the man who had directed everything, made everything succeed, was the iron-fisted Minister who, since 1862, had ruled all the policy of Prussia.

This German Empire which he had himself just proclaimed in the Castle of Versailles, "in a voice vibrating with joy," as was said by one present, might and did answer a national wish; but it was above all the fruit of Bismarckian genius, and it bore unmistakably the imprint of its author.

The first Reichstag of the Empire was elected in the month of March, 1871; after a short debate it accepted the Imperial Constitution, which was only a sort of reproduction of the Federal Constitution of 1867. Fourteen votes opposed any modification of the Constitution; therefore Prussia, with its seventeen votes, remained mistress of the Federal Compact. The new régime came officially into force on the 16th of April; a month later, the Treaty of Frankfort was signed.

Then William conferred the hereditary title of Prince on the Minister who had done such great things, giving him besides the Duchy of Lauenburg. On this land, taken from Denmark in 1864, Bismarck was to make the great domain of Friedrichsruh. There he

Prince
Bismarck

was to spend his last years, and there he was to die.

Bismarck was for nineteen years, up to 1890, to preside over the interior and foreign policy of the new Germany. His chief aim then was to consolidate the edifice he had built in 1871, and consequently his doings lost a little of the aggressive brutality that had characterized them at an earlier period ; but the Iron Chancellor, in his relations with his adversaries at home and abroad, always remained a man of overbearing manners.

Since 1871 the whole foreign policy of Germany, and one may add of the greater number of European States, has been dominated by the Alsace-Lorraine question. The régime of our Armed Peace, the grouping of the European States in two allied bodies, the present war itself, were all consequences of the violence done in 1871 to two French Provinces.

France was vanquished, mutilated, she had had to pay a ransom of five milliards ; nevertheless, she still caused Bismarck enough fears to make him strive to isolate her in Europe. The isolation of France was for Germany the best guarantee that she might enjoy the fruits of her theft and that the vengeance of the vanquished might perhaps cease to be a menace to her.

The insurrection of Poland in 1863, the wars of 1866 and 1870, the Black Sea question, had for some years past brought about an exchange of good offices between Berlin and St. Petersburg ; and the relations between the two Governments became

Bismarck

closer after personal visits. In 1871 the Chancellor Gortschakoff, and then the Tsar Alexander II, came in person to Berlin. Between the Chancellors and the Sovereigns there were several conferences, when they talked of the Peace which had been so hardly won and of the benefit that would come from maintaining it. Not only did Austria retain no ill-feeling as to the memories of 1866, but she had just eagerly recognized the Imperial Germany of 1871.

In his turn Bismarck came to Gastein ; he does not say if he had the opportunity of seeing there, as in 1863, a nest of tomtits and noting how many times in a minute the bird brought a caterpillar or some other insect to his little ones. He had frequent interviews with Herr von Beust, the former Saxon Minister, now become Chancellor of Austria-Hungary.

The two former rivals had completely forgotten the past ; the sole question was the establishment of excellent relations between Germany and Austria.

Bismarck had just made the first advances ; the following year he reaped the benefit. In the month of September, 1872, Berlin witnessed the arrival of the Emperors Alexander and Francis-Joseph. There was a whole week of official fêtes. Between Bismarck and Andrassy, the new President of the Austro-Hungarian Council, a very intimate agreement was set up ; Andrassy, as a Magyar, greatly pleased Bismarck, who counted on using him to shift

**Interview of
the Three
Emperors**

Austrian policy to the East as the best means of turning it away from Germany.

Between Bismarck and Gortschakoff, who were mutually jealous, some misunderstandings arose, not to mention that the Tsar and the Russian statesman did not conceal their sympathy with the French Ambassador, the Vicomte de Gontaut-Biron; but these small unpleasantnesses escaped the attention of most of those present. Moreover, the interview of the three Emperors was regarded as the most significant manifestation of German greatness.

Berlin appeared to have become the diplomatic capital of Europe; countenanced by the good-will of Russia and the marked sympathy of Austria-Hungary, Bismarck's actions ceased to be purely German and took on a European character.

Russia had a very special attraction for William; from Versailles he had sent to Alexander II the famous telegram: "After God, it is to you we owe our victory." In 1875 he travelled to St. Petersburg, accompanied by Bismarck and Moltke, in order to return Alexander's visit.

The Tsar received his friend from Berlin with extraordinary pomp, wishing his reception to be worthy of the meeting of the two masters of the world.

In September 1873 Victor Emmanuel I came to Berlin in his turn to greet the victor of Sedan; the visit of the King of Italy did not end for the moment in a diplomatic agreement; but it was certain that the isolation of France was drawing nearer and nearer.

Why had Alsace-Lorraine been torn from France ? As we have already seen, Bismarck, with a frankness or rather a cynicism to which there is no answer, during the course of the campaign in France had many times given the reason. He was in no wise concerned about pretended historic rights ; that thesis, as pedantic as false, had not yet been invented. It was a question purely and simply of military reasons : the western frontier of Germany must be protected, and, to that end, must absorb Strasburg and Metz. After the Treaty of Frankfort he went on saying and repeating it ; a conversation with the Marquis Gabriad and several speeches which he made from the Reichstag tribune furnish sufficient proofs of this.

The Marquis de Gabriad had been charged by Thiers to resume, as Chargé d'Affaires at Berlin, diplomatic relations between the Wilhelmstrasse and the Quai d'Orsay ; the task would be difficult and painful. On his arrival at the Pariserplatz on the 4th of July, 1871, he had inaugurated his office by incurring the lively displeasure of the Chancellor on the subject of a plan for a military and financial convention which the French Government had attempted to negotiate with General Manteuffel, without reference to the German Chargé d'Affaires at Paris. On this subject on the 12th of August, 1871, Bismarck had an interview with Gabriad which lasted two hours ; the latter reported it in detail in a long letter to M. de Rémusat, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Word for word, the Chancellor had said :

“ It would be scarcely logical to take Metz, which is French, from you, if imperious necessity did not oblige us to keep it. On principle, I should not have wished to keep that town for Germany. When the question was gone into before the Emperor, the Staff asked me if I could guarantee that France would not take her revenge some day or other. I replied that, on the contrary, I was quite convinced she would, and that this war would probably not be the last that would break out between the two countries. In that case, they said to me : Metz is a glacis behind which a hundred thousand men might be placed ; therefore we ought to keep it. I will say as much of Alsace and Lorraine. If peace were to be lasting, we should have made a mistake in taking them from you ; but, for us, those Provinces will be a difficulty.”

M. de Gabriac answered : “ A Venetia, with France at its back ? ”

“ Yes,” said the Chancellor. “ A Venetia, with France at its back.”

On this subject the Marquis de Gabriac has recorded the profound impression Prince Bismarck made on him.

“ I found his especial superiority,” he says, “ to lie in his fighting powers. His absolute disdain of reticence ; his habit of getting from the very first to the bottom of the question he was discussing ; the haughty frankness of his declarations ; his speech, a little slow at first, but vigorous and rapid so soon as he felt any emotion, took me into a world

Bismarck

quite other than that in which I have negotiated up to now. . . . With M. de Bismarck one felt that each one of his ideas or words might be interpreted as an act of Government. It was a master rather than a minister before whom I stood. I seemed to see Arminius on the morrow of the disaster of the Roman legions, receiving the envoys of the vanquished people."

Among the official speeches Bismarck made from the tribune of the Reichstag on the Alsace-Lorraine question, one of the most important was that of May 2nd, 1871, when the bill concerning the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine by the Germanic Empire was first under discussion. Let us hear him speak.

"Several times," he said, "we have been told that we might be satisfied with the costs of the war and the demolition of the fortresses of Alsace and Lorraine. I have always rejected this solution, because I did not consider it likely to maintain peace. To establish servitude on foreign soil is to create a very heavy burden on the sentiment of sovereignty and independence of the country on which it is laid.

"Another way—and one which had partisans even among the inhabitants of Alsace—would have been to form out of the two Provinces of Alsace and Lorraine a neutral State like Belgium and Switzerland. In this case there would have been, from the North Sea to the Swiss Alps, a chain of Neutral States which, no doubt, would have made it impossible for us to attack France, but the protection of which would have made it easy for France to disembark troops on our northern coasts. More-

over, the neutrality of a State can be maintained only if the population of that State be resolved to keep up a neutral attitude. In Alsace and Lorraine, where the population remains linked to France by its interests, its sympathies and its memories, neutrality would have been but a snare for us in a new Franco-German War.

“There was, therefore, but one thing to do—purely and simply to submit those countries, with their strong fortresses, to German domination ; in our turn to use them as a glacis for Germany against France, and so to put back by some stages the starting-point for French attacks, if France, grown strong again or supported by Allies, once more threw down the gauntlet to us.”

In this same speech of the 2nd of May, 1871, the Chancellor clearly stated that Alsace-Lorraine was above all an instrument for the unification of Germany. “A Confederation,” he said, “composed of Sovereign Princes and free towns, making the conquest of a country, which, for its own safety, it is obliged to keep, but which thus becomes a possession common to all the participants—that is a thing very rare in its way.”

That definition of Alsace-Lorraine must be kept in mind : “A possession common to all the participants” ; that was to state clearly that the cohesion of the Empire had been largely made by the complicity of all in the crime committed against France.

As a good pupil of the Cynic, Frederick II, Bismarck came to banter his victims. It was to some notable—I know not who—of Hesse or Hanover,

that he said, to console him for having become Prussian against his own will : " Prussia, you see, is like a flannel waistcoat. It scratches unpleasantly at first ; but it's wholesome, and it sticks to the skin well."

At least he spared the French of Strasburg and Metz his ill-bred jokes, for he had no doubt of the depth of their fidelity to France.

" Naturally," he said in April 1872, " there are a great number of people in Alsace-Lorraine who wish to preserve French nationality and refuse to become Germans. We foresaw that ; but we were obliged to take that strip of earth to protect ourselves [always the same *leitmotif*] against the incursions of freebooters, which, for two hundred years, France had sent against us. It goes without saying that we could not authorize those who elected for French nationality to remain in Alsace-Lorraine, because then every one would elect for France."

In 1873 the Government laid before the Reichstag a statement as to the legislation and administration of Alsace-Lorraine during the year 1872-1873. This gave the Chancellor the opportunity to return again to this subject, so painful for our brothers and us, so troublesome for the people of Germany. Here are some passages from his speech of the 16th of May, 1873 :

" It is not from a mania for possessing territories and men, nor for the legitimate desire to redress an ancient wrong, two hundred years old, but from the hard necessity of expecting fresh attacks from a warlike country, that we have extended our de-

mands for the cession of territory and fortresses as far as is the case, so that we may have a bulwark behind which we may await further attacks similar to those that each generation in Germany has suffered from during three centuries.

“Doubt our cleverness—for we officials of Northern Germany, and especially we Prussians, are not celebrated for our clever way of gaining friends or doing disagreeable things in an amiable fashion—doubt our cleverness, then, but do not doubt our devotion, our good-will, our courage, our steadfast resolve to show an unshaken front to all the enemies of the Empire.”

On the 3rd of March, 1874, when a new administrative régime had been acting for two months in the Reichsland, Bismarck again took up the word on the Alsace-Lorrainers :

“I have already said that we did not flatter ourselves that we should succeed quickly in making them happy, neither was it for that reason that we made the annexation ; we have built a rampart against the irruptions that, for two hundred years, a passionate and warlike people have made on us ; a people to whom Germany has the misfortune and discomfort of being the only neighbour in Europe directly exposed. In face of this bellicose people, we have to break the point of Wissenburg which dug deep into our flesh ; and it is precisely that point of Alsace which is inhabited by a part of the ex-French population that vies with the Gaul in the passion for war, and in a veritably Germanic [*sic*] hatred of the Germanic race.”

The " Empire Country," or Reichsland, was first of all subjected to an exceptional régime. If it was one State the more, bringing up the States of the Empire to twenty-six, it was not an autonomous State, enjoying, like the others, the right of self-administration.

A veritable dictatorship, organized by Bismarck, began, on the morrow of the Treaty of Frankfort, to weigh down Alsace-Lorraine. The two Provinces were given over to a swarm of officials, all Germans ; the use of the French language in official documents was forbidden ; sentences of fines and imprisonment were pitilessly inflicted on those—and they were legion—against whom the German Government thought it had cause for complaint. The introduction of German military service in 1872 was an opportunity for fresh severity ; it was then that a great number of Alsace-Lorrainers surreptitiously crossed the frontier to come and enrol themselves in the Foreign Legion.

In 1874, at the end of three years of this régime of repression, Bismarck was willing to allow the Alsace-Lorrainers the right possessed by German citizens of electing Deputies to the Reichstag. The " Empire Country " could not itself be represented at the Bundesrat, since it had no autonomy ; but there was nothing to prevent its inhabitants, since they were looked upon as Germans, from being represented at the Reichstag. Then, for the first time, elections took place in the annexed Provinces. There were fifteen Deputies to elect ; all the fifteen, despite the pressure exercised by a purely German

administration in all the public offices, were protesting Deputies.

In the name of all, M. Teutsch, Deputy of the Saverne district, from the tribune of the Reichstag, read a protest which recalled that of their predecessors from the tribune at Bordeaux in 1871. Among other words used by M. Teutsch, in that memorable sitting of the 18th of February, 1874, were these :

“ In the teachings of morality and justice we can find nothing, absolutely nothing, which can excuse our annexation to your Empire ; and in this our reason finds itself in agreement with our heart. In truth, our heart is irresistibly attracted to our French Motherland. Two centuries of life and thought in common create, between the members of the same family, a sacred tie which no argument, and still less violence, can destroy.”

The Polish Deputies and two or three members of the Socialist party applauded these noble words ; from all the other benches there were protests and hoots. The Alsace-Lorraine Deputies could only retire.

It pleased the Chancellor, in his speech of the 3rd of March, to return to the scandalous manner in which Teutsch's protest had been received.

“ The laughter and exclamations,” he said, “ were in no wise, so far as I am able to judge, aimed at the cause M. Teutsch was defending, but at his not knowing how to modify his declamations and gesticulations before a German audience. What happened to this gentleman in his speech, without any fault of his, is what sometimes happens before

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a German audience to a French tragedian, who often finds it extraordinarily difficult to keep strictly within the limits outside which, to the German mind, tragedy ceases."

Is not this fashion of explaining, or rather this coarse, contemptuous irony, on the part of the highest Imperial official, worse than insult?

In this same year, 1874, Bismarck had set up in Alsace-Lorraine an administration which appeared to offer the annexed people some guarantees: thirty Delegates, elected by the general Councils of Strasbourg, Colmar and Metz, made up the district Commission—*Landesausschuss*—which was to manage the affairs of the country; but it was nothing but a consultative or registering chamber. All power was in the hands of a Governor, the Emperor's Lieutenant—*Statthalter*—who was assisted by a Secretary of State and four Ministers. This régime became definitive by the law of the 4th of July, 1879, which fixed the administrative status of the Reichsland. The suppression of the dictatorship and the establishment of a regular régime produced no better result than that of force either in the country of Oberlé or in that of Colette Baudoche. Alsace-Lorraine, unconquerable, remained faithful to its memories and its hopes.

In 1875 Bismarck nearly made France pay for the ill-humour which his want of success in the "Empire-land" caused him.

At the time of the Commune the Chancellor had accepted the overtures made him on behalf of the federals by Cluseret, and had shown less

eagerness in listening to Versailles than to Paris. It was a kind of blackmail which he was trying to levy on the Plenipotentiaries of the French Government.

In 1875 France had completely freed herself from her financial obligations to Germany. The Convention of the 15th of March, 1875, negotiated by Thiers, had settled the payment of the last hundred millions and the evacuation of territory, which was an accomplished fact in the month of September. Verdun, the heroic city, which has now for three years withstood the assaults of Germany, had been the last to be evacuated, and, at last, France was free; in her side she bore a bleeding wound, but, at least, she belonged to herself. The Iron Chancellor followed with uneasiness the military and economic revival of France, which had begun under the Presidency of Thiers and continued under that of MacMahon.

"France is recovering too fast," he had said as early as 1872, the year in which Thiers had brought in the military law which gave our country a fresh army.

Suddenly, in the spring of 1875, pessimistic rumours began to circulate; France was about to be attacked by Germany, it was said.

**The alarm
of 1875**

A paper inspired by the Wilhelmstrasse, the *Post*, on the 8th of April, published an article under the heading: "Is War in Sight?" ending with, "Yes, certainly war is in sight, although of course the cloud may disperse."

No one doubted that Bismarck had inspired this

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article. The cause or the pretext for this bellicose agitation was the discussion in the National Assembly of Versailles of a law as to the cadres which increased the number of battalions in a regiment.

Germany was no longer represented at Paris by the famous Count Harry von Arnim, unscrupulously ambitious, as Bismarck called him, not finding him supple enough. "My ambassadors," the Chancellor had said to Count von Arnim himself, "are wheels which ought to turn at a sign from me, as a simple sergeant performs a movement, at the order given by the Commander-in-Chief, without knowing why."

As the Paris wheel turned badly, Bismarck had removed von Arnim, and then had had him tried for abstracting official documents, and the former Ambassador had been sentenced to nine months' imprisonment (1874). His successor in the Rue de Lille was Prince Clovis von Hohenlohe-Schillingsfurst, formerly Prime Minister of Bavaria.

On the 5th of May, 1875, Hohenlohe had gone to the Quaid'Orsay to lay the grievances of his Government before the Duc Decazes, Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Buffet Ministry.

"Our General Staff," he said, "always looks upon the final aim of your military organization as war against Germany."

Happily for her, the France of 1875 possessed the sympathy in Europe which had failed the France of 1870. The French Ambassador at Petersburg, General Le Flô, had personally confided to Alexander II his patriotic uneasiness, and the Tsar had not

confined himself to reassurances, but had acted in person for the maintenance of peace. Coming to Berlin with the Chancellor Gortschakoff on the 10th of May, he had found his old uncle, the Emperor William, sincerely pacific in disposition. At the same time Bismarck received a pressing request from Disraeli to maintain peace in Europe. He then laid the blame for all this warlike agitation on the old Marshal von Moltke ; but he discovered to whom he must speak. Gortschakoff had an interview with him at Berlin at which the English Ambassador, Odo Russell, made a third. Bismarck complained that there should be any doubt of his desire to maintain peace ; he spent sleepless nights in attempting to find means to assure it.

"It is just those sleepless nights," answered Gortschakoff, "that make us uneasy. Remember that you bear the burden of your glory ; when you suffer from insomnia, Europe is feverish."

Bismarck's vexation was extreme ; he blamed everybody—the French Ambassador at Berlin, the Vicomte de Gontaut-Biron, who, according to him, had set it all going, and the Russian Chancellor. He advised Gortschakoff to have coins struck with the words, "Gortschakoff protects France," on the reverse ; he advised him also to appear on the stage disguised as a guardian angel in a white robe and wings in the midst of Bengal lights. At one moment he gave in his resignation, which was not accepted ; all he could do was to go and get over his anger on his Varzin estate.

Only four years after the Treaty of Frankfort

he had come up against the polite but firm intervention of Russia and England, who had prevented a fresh war on France.

On leaving Berlin, Alexander had sent his sister, the Queen of Würtemberg, a reassuring telegram: "I am taking with me from Berlin a formal assurance of peace."¹ This telegram was reproduced in the papers with this witticism, which greatly increased Bismarck's fury: "L'Emporté of Berlin gives formal assurances of peace." "L'Emporté de Berlin" may recall the *tolle Junker* of the Chancellor's youth.

From this war-alarm of 1875 two conclusions may be deduced: one that Bismarck and the military party were constant to their idea that France must be crushed at whatever cost; the other, that the relations between Russia and Germany had no longer the cordial character which, in 1872, had marked the interview of the three Emperors.

The Congress of Berlin was soon to bring forth a fresh and deep cause for dissent between Berlin and Petersburg.

During the summer of 1875 an insurrection had broken out in the Turkish Province of Herzegovina; once again a conflagration was rekindling in the Balkans, and all the problems of the Protean Eastern question were about to be set up afresh. Twenty years earlier, at the time of the Crimean War, Prussia had been completely indifferent to the Eastern question; but since then how many changes had come about in

**The Congress
of Berlin**

¹ "J'emporte de Berlin des assurances formelles de paix."

the general situation ! Prussia was no longer merely a German Power ; she had risen to the first rank of great European Powers ; her commerce was beginning to represent great interests in the Provinces of the Turkish Empire ; lastly, she was allied to two great States which were directly concerned in the Eastern question. The Russia of Alexander II, faithful to its historic traditions, never lost its interest in Constantinople and its brothers of the Orthodox Faith. Austria, forbidden by Sadowa to mix in German affairs, had a natural inclination to look for some compensation in those of the Balkans ; but its policy could not act in the Lower Danube country without coming against the policy of Russia.

What would be the attitude of Germany, caught between the contradictory ambitions of its two Allies ? Bismarck's sympathy was certainly with Austria-Hungary ; the Chancellor Andrassy was the man for his policy, inclined as he was to look towards the East ; Gortschakoff, on the contrary, reminded him of the unpleasant intervention of May 1875, when Russia had shown friendliness to France. Still, the German Chancellor thought it wiser to maintain neutrality towards both his neighbours, anyhow until events allowed him to take a decided side.

Two years were passed in discussions and diplomatic conferences, until the massacre of Christians redoubled in the Turkish Provinces and Gladstone aroused the indignation of Europe by denouncing the Bulgarian atrocities. There were those in

Germany who were astonished at the abstention of the Government, and seemed to regret it. Bismarck, from the tribune of the Reichstag on the 7th of December, 1876, stated his interpretation of Eastern affairs.

“We are reproached,” he said, “with being too much inclined to peace, and of not making use, as we ought, of the power in our hands. In the meantime, the hour for making use of this power is not come and, please God, will not come for us. . . . Our policy must be used in consulting our own interest, and we shall not be led, by any offer, to any other policy than that. . . . Therefore, I do not advise any active participation by Germany in these matters ; for in them is no advantage for Germany that is worth—excuse the roughness of the expression—the bones of one Pomeranian Fusilier.”

And to-day, what must be the thoughts of the souls of thousands of Pomeranian Fusiliers, who, since 1914, have let their bones be broken for Ferdinand the Felon and for Mahomet V, whose senile imbecility amuses itself by having Greeks and Armenians massacred ? For Bismarck, Bulgarians, Rumanians and Serbians—all the Balkans—were one and the same breed ; “all sheep-stealers,” he said. Thank God ! it is not necessary to be a great student of the Eastern question not to confuse the executioners with the victims. Stealers—yes, the Bulgarians, who join brigandage with cynicism, and flaunt, but not for long, the proceeds of their thefts. But the heroic Serbs, who have suffered, and still suffer, so cruelly ; and the

Rumanians, who joined us so nobly and were twice betrayed—betrayed by Tsarist Russia, betrayed by Maximalist Russia—how, I say, will not only the Entente, but the impartial historian find words to tell Belgrade and Bucharest of its admiration and gratitude?

But Russia, weary of waiting for a collective intervention of the Great Powers, determined, in April 1877, to make a direct attack on Turkey; Rumania alone, ever valiant, ever eager to fulfil its historical destiny, joined its armies with those of Russia.

After the taking of Plevna, in which the Rumanians played so great a part, the Russians crossed the Balkans, passed victoriously through the whole of Bulgaria, and paused only at the very gates of Constantinople. On the 3rd of March, 1878, at San Stefano, they dictated the conditions of peace to the Turks: one of the most important was the creation of a Principality of Greater Bulgaria reaching from the Danube to the Ægean Sea. The statue of Alexander II, the Liberator of the Bulgarians, stands in the principal promenade of Sofia in memory of this great event. What must Ferdinand and his Ministers, now the best of friends with the Turks, think when they pass this monument? Nothing at all, no doubt, for at Sofia, as at Berlin, the protests of conscience cause no disquiet to statesmen.

Bismarck had kept silence during the whole of the Russo-Turkish War; after the Treaty of San Stefano he made a fresh statement in the Reichstag.

This was to take up, with full approval, the idea just brought forward by his friend Andrassy, of holding an International Conference for the making of modifications in the Treaty of the 3rd of March. He thus defined the part Germany was disposed to play in these European discussions:

“ I am not of opinion that we should follow the Napoleonic road, or that we should wish to be, I do not say even the arbiter, but even the school-master of Europe. Ours is a more modest rôle ; I picture it to myself as that of an honest broker who really wants to bring the matter to a good end.”

Gortschakoff was aware of the trap into which his rival was luring him, but to refuse the Conference meant a fresh war in the near future, and, after the lengthy effort Russia had just made, she had great need of recovery.

The German Government let it be known that the Conference would open at Berlin ; the choice of the capital of the Kingdom of Prussia, and of the German Empire, was truly the material consecration of the ascendancy which Bismarck and his policy held in Europe.

The Congress sat for a month, from the 13th of June to the 13th of July ; and the final Treaty was a complete alteration of the Treaty of San Stefano. Two very important questions, in which the honest broker carried the day, were settled in a fashion very disagreeable to Russia. Greater Bulgaria was to be cut up into three portions, of which one only kept a relative independence ; the Turkish Provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbian in

race, were to be occupied and administered by Austria-Hungary. In the first matter Bismarck had joined hands with Lord Beaconsfield ; in the second, with Count Andrassy. In both cases Russia had been tricked. Bismarck had had Turkey given two-thirds of the Bulgaria of San Stefano, thus securing for the future Germany's political and economic interests on the shores of the Bosphorus. On the other hand, only twelve years after Sadowa, he enabled his Austrian friends to obtain a fine territorial compensation ; he turned aside the Hapsburg Monarchy still further from Germany ; and he made it into a Balkan Power, which was another means of using it in the future in opposition to Russian ambitions.

So the honest broker deemed his work had been well done : without taking any tip for himself, he had remade the map of the Balkans in his own way, and his twofold programme had not cost him the bones of a single Pomeranian Fusilier.

At the Congress Bismarck had shown great attention to the French Delegation, the head of which was Waddington, Foreign Minister in the Dufaure Cabinet ; he willingly took a part in the discussions concerning the eventual occupation of Tunis which Waddington was then having with Lord Salisbury. It was not displeasing to him that France should turn her eyes away from the Rhine frontier ; besides, the question of Tunis might some day embroil Italy and France, and that promised a future Italo-Prussian Alliance which was not to be despised.

The results of the Congress of Berlin had caused

lively dissatisfaction at the Russian Court and in Russian public opinion. Bismarck took no heed of it ; he was too much engaged in cultivating his good relations with Vienna. In October 1879 these resulted in a Treaty of Alliance between Germany and Austria, the first link in the future Triple Alliance.

The Triple Alliance

The old Emperor alone remained disposed for the former alliance with Russia ; in his eyes it represented family relations as much as those of policy ; in September, at Alexandrovo, he had had a personal interview with his nephew Alexander II, but that had changed nothing in the general situation.

"He went to Alexandrovo," said Bismarck, "in spite of all I could do to prevent him. . . . The Russians turned his head by telling him sentimental stories about Queen Louise." And William had been obliged, almost against his will, to sign "the Alliance for Peace and Reciprocal Defence," which had been negotiated directly between Bismarck and Andrassy.

To conclude the Alliance with Austria-Hungary Bismarck travelled in person to Vienna. The journey had the character of a triumph for him ; in train, in carriage, everywhere, he was cheered and applauded. Verily, the German Austrian knew as little of dignity as of rancour. As for the Iron Chancellor, he was in raptures.

"Coalitions are your nightmare," Count Schouvaloff, second Russian Plenipotentiary at the Berlin Congress, had said to him.

"Necessarily," he had replied. And here was the nightmare vanishing away.

The Alliance between Germany and Austria-Hungary in 1879 was an event of capital importance in European politics. On the one hand, it was the starting-point of the intimacy between Berlin and Vienna whose consequences we see to-day; the Emperor-King of Vienna-Budapest was about to be a "brilliant second" and would finally become simply a vassal or a prisoner. On the other hand, the Treaty of 1879 made it necessary for Russia to seek an alliance as a counterpoise to the Austro-German grouping; and she therefore began to look towards France. The Franco-Russian alliance was one day to be the result of the cavalier fashion in which Bismarck had treated Russia at the Congress of Berlin.

Soon the Chancellor found fresh support for his policy on the other side of the Alps. The French expedition to Tunis and the Treaty of Bardo in 1881 had been a cause of acute displeasure in Italy. King Humbert had a lively admiration for the greatness of Germany; his Government was more than willing to hold out a hand to Berlin. Bismarck very willingly accepted these overtures, if he did not instigate them, and, as his foreign policy was already founded on the Austrian Alliance, he induced Italy to enter into the same combination, which, with the questions of Trent and Trieste, and Italian "Irredentism" was, in short, to marry the Republic of Venice to the Grand Turk.

Thus, in 1882, was formed the compact of the

Bismarck

Triple Alliance, which was to be renewed several times. When Crispi was President of the Council in Italy the Triple Alliance took up a decidedly hostile attitude towards France; notably, on the occasion of his two visits to his friend Bismarck, who received him in 1887 and 1888 at his Friedrichsruh estate; and again when Humbert I came to Berlin in 1889 to return the visit William had paid the Quirinal at his accession.

Since the present war, the Triple Alliance has ceased to be; Italy has found herself back again where her traditions, her sympathies, her interest showed her her true place, beside France against Austria.

In 1882 Bismarck could look with satisfaction at the map of Europe. On the west France was isolated; in the centre, Berlin, Vienna and Rome formed a closely united group; on the east, the Russia of Alexander II was turning its attention towards the difficulties of its internal policy. The author of the Triple Alliance believed himself strong enough to renew the Alliance of the three Emperors. In 1884 a convention was signed afresh by William I, Francis-Joseph and Alexander III, who moreover had a personal interview at Skierniowice, in Russian Poland.

Bismarck plumed himself on this "reinsurance treaty," which made him more than ever the master of European politics; but the force of events was soon to prove stronger than these artificial combinations. Russia and France would not long delay their *rapprochement*. In 1891, at the time of the occur-

rences at Cronstadt, Bismarck was no longer in power ; but, in the bitterness of his retirement, he was able to declare that in the diplomatic edifice he had laboriously reared henceforth a great fissure would be perceived.

The first Governor of Alsace-Lorraine after that country had been given a regular régime had been

**Manteuffel
and Hohen-
lohe in Al-
sace-Lorraine** General Manteuffel. A gentleman of the old school, with scarcely anything of Germanic stiffness, the choice, which was due to William himself, might be

looked upon as a happy one. To keep an eye upon him, the Chancellor had given him his own son, Count William von Bismarck, as Private Secretary. Manteuffel came with a programme of conciliation ; he had said at Colmar : " I respect the attachment the Alsatians feel for the great country to which they have been united for two hundred years. So long a period can never be blotted out." In the same way at Metz he had said : " I feel with you how painful it must be to be separated from France, so distinguished by her genius and her previous life . . . I wish to pay my court to the Alsatians because I understand their feelings." And again at Strasburg : " As of old the Doges of Venice used to wed the sea, I should like to do the same with Alsace-Lorraine."

The Germans twitted Manteuffel with his weakness ; but the Alsace-Lorrainers were not won over, though the administrative measures had no longer so brutal a character.

The elections of 1881 again sent fifteen protest-

ing Deputies to the Reichstag. Manteuffel reverted partially to the more vigorous measures ; he suppressed newspapers and prohibited French clubs ; but the Chancellor found this insufficient ; Germanization made no progress.

Manteuffel died in 1885, in the sixth year of his Governorship ; and Bismarck appointed Prince von Hohenlohe as his successor. The former Ambassador to Paris carried out the instructions from Berlin in a much more docile manner. Measures became more harsh than ever ; a Deputy from Metz, M. Antoine, was expelled, as guilty of intercourse with the hereditary enemy ; Alsace-Lorrainers, who had adhered to the League of Patriots, were sentenced by the Courts at Leipzig to years of imprisonment in fortresses ; a passport, *visé* at the German Embassy in Paris, was required from every Frenchman coming to the Reichsland ; even the stay of foreigners in Alsace-Lorraine was subjected to numberless formalities. These vexatious measures brought about a state of great tension in the relations between France and Germany.

When, in 1879, the Government had asked for a seven years' renewal of the military credits, the Deputies had complained of the increase of the financial burden that weighed on Germany, and Moltke had answered : " Do you wish to return Alsace-Lorraine to France ? That would alter the matter ; if you do not wish it, you can only accept the proposal."

In 1886 the Reichstag was again asked for a considerable addition for the same purpose, and again for another period of seven years. In order to

obtain it, Bismarck, from the tribune of the Reichstag, spoke of the dangers which Germany might incur from France.

“Between us and France,” he said, “the work of peace is difficult, because for very long there has existed an historical lawsuit which divides the two countries; it is the determining of the frontier which has become doubtful and litigious since the time when France acquired complete unity and royal power. This lawsuit is not ended, and we must expect to see it continue on the side of the French. We are in actual possession of the object of litigation, if I may so describe Alsace; we have therefore no motive for fighting for it. But that France still dreams of reconquering it all must admit, at least all who pay any attention to the French Press. I have confidence in the pacific disposition of the French Government and of the majority of the French people; but I cannot lull myself into sufficient security to enable me to say that we need no longer fear a French war. It is my conviction that it is through an attack from France that we must fear it; whether it be in ten days or ten years is a question I cannot answer.”

After all, the Reichstag turned a deaf ear to his arguments, consenting to vote the credits asked for only for three years. They were dissolved. A very fiery electoral campaign ensued; the official newspapers set up General Boulanger, then French War Minister, as a bugbear, and the new Reichstag voted the increase in the credits for the seven years asked for.

Bismarck

And then over Alsace, that unhappy land, reigned what M. Preiss called "the graveyard Peace."

Soon afterwards there happened an incident on the frontier which had all the appearance of a provocation from Germany.

M. Schnaebelé, Special Commissioner at Pagny-sur-Moselle, had received an invitation from his

German colleagues at Ars-sur-Moselle to
The Schnaebelé affair go to the frontier to settle some matter.

Schnaebelé went to the meeting-place on the 27th of April, 1887. He had passed the frontier-post, when two police agents set upon him and seized him. He succeeded in freeing himself and regaining French soil; but he was followed by the German agents, arrested by them, and carried off. . . . This waylaying was doubly serious since it was a violation of French territory.

The French Foreign Minister, Flourens, sent a very strong note through the Ambassador, Herbette. For some days Bismarck lay low; he charged his eldest son, Count Herbert, with the following up of the matter. France insisted; her rights were explicit; the Emperor, who felt his end approaching, did not want a fresh war. . . . At the end of a week the French Commissioner was set at liberty. If Bismarck had contemplated an evil blow at the "hereditary enemy," the thing had missed fire.

The same year the first period of the Triple Alliance was coming to an end; Bismarck renewed his Alliance with Vienna and Rome for another five years, till 1892. This did not prevent him from increasing the armaments; in 1888 there was a

fresh demand for credits to increase the German Army by seven hundred thousand men ; and once more France was the theme of the Chancellor's bellicose harangues.

"The prospect on the French side," he said at the Reichstag on the 8th of February, 1888, "looks more pacific, much less explosive than it did a year ago. But war is not always made for hate's sake ; for, if this were so, France ought to be incessantly at war, not only with us, but also with England and Italy ; she hates all her neighbours. We might easily be taken in by friendship and benevolence, too easily perhaps—playing the saint!—but by threats certainly not. We Germans fear God, but nothing else in all the world."

If the Chancellor had not been seized with *furor Teutonicus*, he might have been asked whence came these threats. . . . Was not he himself their best and only contriver ? If France felt hatred, it was against neither England nor Italy ; with those Powers she could have but rivalries or misunderstandings which would vanish at the first explanation.

The hatred she kept in her heart was for Germany, who had stolen her goods, and for Germany alone. The Treaty of Frankfort had incorporated in Germany two French Provinces in spite of the formal protests of their inhabitants ; let us never weary of repeating it.

Ever since then an ulcer—Lloyd George has used the word quite recently—has infected European peace. All the rodomontades of a Bismarck can-

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not alter the truth. The peace of the world will never be restored until the day when the great injustice done to France is repaired, until the day when it shall have been made impossible for Bismarck's country to do any further wrong to the rights and liberty of others.

CHAPTER VI

LAST FIGHTS

The parties in the Reichstag—The Kulturkampf—Social Democracy—The German Colonies—Difficulties with the Reichstag—Relations with William I and the Empress Augusta—The Emperor Frederick III—The Emperor William II—International Conference on labour questions—The Resignation—Last years at Friedrichsruh—The work of Bismarck.

THE Constitution given to the German Empire by Bismarck in 1871 had nothing parliamentary about it; the Chancellor was responsible solely to the Emperor, who was responsible to no one, since his hereditary power depended purely and simply on his quality as head of the Hohenzollern House. The Reichstag, elected by universal suffrage, had only a negative power; it might thwart the Chancellor's acts by refusing to vote for the legal proposals presented to it; but such refusal was tantamount to its committing suicide, for, in such a case, it was dissolved to give place to a fresh and more docile assembly.

Still, negative as was the power of the Reichstag, it was frequently a source of embarrassment to Bismarck; in fact, it was almost impossible for him to count on a compact and faithful majority. This is explained by the particularist spirit which

had long reigned in Germany and which the abrupt unification of 1866-1871 had not modified. Putting aside the less important divisions of the Reichstag, at least in the years that followed 1871, five principal parties might be counted.

The Conservative Party, *Deutschconservativ*, was made up of large landed proprietors—the “Agrarians”—and was recruited almost entirely from the agricultural districts of East Prussia ; it practically represented the Prussian, and not the German spirit ; if the Liberals inclined to “absorb Prussia in Germany,” these had exactly the opposite inclination—that of absorbing Germany in Prussia ; they were frankly Protestant, militarist, partisans of the Court and the privileges of nobility. Their organ was the *Kreuz-Zeitung* (the Gazette of the Cross), with which Bismarck had been entirely in sympathy in the first part of his life.

This party was looked on very favourably by the Emperor, but less and less so by Bismarck ; for the Chancellor, who belonged to it by his origin and his character as *Junker*, was no longer, after the Constitutions of 1866 and 1871, the Conservative of strictly Prussian ideas he had shown himself at the beginning of his Ministry. In Prussia itself, in the Upper Chamber, the Conservative party was about the only one represented ; it had strongly supported Bismarck in his fight with the Second Chamber ; but, little by little, it had taken up a position against him. The Chancellor has devoted a whole chapter of his “Thoughts and Memories” to the narrative of his rupture with the Conservatives.

The opportunity was furnished in 1872 by a law on the inspection of elementary schools. The *Kreuz-Zeitung* declared war against him; it published a series of articles on "the Bismarckian Era," which greatly entertained the provincial nobility, but highly displeased the all-powerful master of the Wilhelmstrasse.

From the Conservatives, properly so called, the Liberal Conservatives broke away and formed an Empire Party, *Reichspartei*. At one time, in 1878, the numbers of its members nearly equalled those of the Conservatives—57 against 59; but eventually it considerably decreased. The Empire Party was principally recruited among the great manufacturers and proprietors, especially of Silesia. It always remained faithful to Bismarck.

The National Liberal Party was a sort of Right Centre, and was recruited more or less from all parts of the Empire, more particularly from the regions on the west of the Elbe, which were districts in which industry, commerce and universities flourished. Its members all belonged to the well-off and intellectual middle class of manufacturers, merchants and professors; it completely represented the German, in opposition to the Prussian spirit, and somewhat resembled the spirit of the members of the Parliament of Frankfort in 1848. Bismarck, the author of German unity, was quite the man for the National Liberals, but to retain his majority he had to make concessions to them in the way of Free Trade and lay ideas.

The Progressives had two names: the Party of

Progress, *Fortschritt*, and then, after 1884, Liberal Party, *Freisinnig*. They were distinguished from the National Liberals inasmuch as they opposed the intense militarism of Germany, and remained to the end obstinate partisans of Free Trade according to the English doctrines of the Manchester School. In 1881 they numbered 61 members, principally natives of the great towns of the Empire, of the Kingdom of Saxony, and, in Prussia, of the Provinces of Holstein and Prussia.

The Centre—*Centrum*—was essentially the Catholic party and was recruited from Bavaria, Baden and the Catholic Provinces of Prussia, namely, Rhenish Prussia, Hanover and Polish Posen. It represented Catholic Conservative, and especially clerical, ideas; many of the electors of the Centre belonged to the middle and working classes among the populations of the Rhenish and Polish districts, and, in consequence, the Centre had links with the Democratic parties.

Such were the five parties of the Reichstag which possessed any considerable numbers, their members on an average varying from 50 to 100. But there were other parties, made up of different units—Poles, Alsace-Lorrainers, Guelphs, the Democratic Party (*Volkspartei*), Socialists, etc.

The Iron Chancellor affected a supreme contempt for all the members of the Reichstag, anyhow in intimate talk. "I'm going to show myself at the Reichstag," he said one day to his confidant, Maurice Busch, "and to honour them with my presence. Ah! to whatever party they belong, all these

Deputies are alike. They're a flock of slaves, all flat on their faces before the master of to-morrow. The only difference is that the Conservatives do it in public, while the Liberals do it in secret. But apart from that . . ."

It looks as if on that day—it was in 1880—Bismarck's memory must have been a little short ; he forgot that the Centre had not given way to him, and that Social Democracy was—then—a party in inflexible opposition.

The strife between the Chancellor and the Centre lasted nearly fifteen years, and gave rise to immense agitation. Bismarck's partisans gave it the name—an insult to his enemies—of **The Kultur-**
kampf Kulturkampf. The word is said to have been invented by the physiologist Virchow, head of the Progressive Party in the Chamber of Prussian Deputies. "Fight for Civilization"; as if the thesis the Centre represented were in itself hostile to civilization ; as if Catholicism were not one of the higher forms of civilization. At bottom it was an episode in the eternal question of the relations between Church and State.

Bismarck belonged to the Evangelical or Lutheran Church, and officially practised its rites ; he used to say that if he had not believed in a Divine Providence "which had destined this German nation to something good and great," he would have at once given up his post as statesman. "I tell you," he said, with his colossal pride, "that if I had not been so good a Christian, you would not have had so great a Chancellor of the Confederation."

But it seems that this faith, so prone to belaud itself, was a pretty near neighbour of indifference, and that he looked upon religious questions chiefly from the utilitarian and political point of view. When he heard, in September, 1870, of the entry of the Italians into Rome, he spoke at once of welcoming the Pope at Cologne or Fulda ; he even, it seems, asked the Archbishop of Posen, Ledochowski, to discuss the transference of the Holy See with Pius IX. He spoke of the matter in a singularly free and easy fashion.

"We should have the Poles with us," he said ; "the opposition of the Ultramontanes would at once cease in Bavaria. Only there's the King ; he would never consent ; he fears him like the devil. But there wouldn't be the slightest danger. The Pope would be sitting amongst us like a good old fellow who comes to ask for a little place, and eats and drinks quietly, and takes his pinch of snuff, and even, at a pinch, smokes his cigar."

Such was the Bismarckian fashion of settling the Roman question.

From the first the Centre was the group of all Catholic Deputies to the Reichstag. Among them were some who had long resisted the unification of Germany, like the Bavarians ; others were the sworn enemies of Prussia, like the Poles of Posen. "When I set up the Kulturkampf," wrote Bismarck, "I was principally determined on it by the Polish side of the question."

It is easy to believe this, for one knows the dealings of the Germans with their Polish neighbours,

and the legitimate hatred of the martyrs of Posen for their oppressors. A Polish priest, one Schaffranek, elected to the Reichstag, distinguished himself by his patriotic intransigence.

The Prince-Bishop of Breslau, on the complaint of the Government, forbade him to "sit" on the left; and, as a matter of fact, he did not *sit* again; for, though the sittings might last six or more hours, in front of the benches of the left, standing stiff as a sentinel, was always to be seen a big fellow, who, without having to rise, spoke and belaboured the Germans. It was Schaffranek, the Polish priest.

The Centre, heterogeneous enough on account of the origin of its members, was organized under the strictest discipline by a parliamentarian of the first rank, Windthorst; a former Minister of the King of Hanover, he had not forgotten the brutal spoliation suffered by his master in 1866. In an assembly so divided as the Reichstag, the ninety or hundred votes of the Centre, always unanimous, were certainly not a negligible quantity.

In July 1871 Bismarck caused the suppression of the "Catholic Direction," which for thirty years had had charge, in the Ministry of Public Worship, of Catholic affairs in Prussia, and was exclusively entrusted to Catholic officials. The pretext for this suppression was the crisis which had just come about in the bosom of the Catholic Church after the proclamation of the dogma of Papal Infallibility. In reality, its opponents were a minute minority, who, in Germany, grouped themselves around Döllinger, theoretically the head of the Old Catholics; but it

was not displeasing to Bismarck to be even with his Catholic adversaries in the Reichstag and Landtag by putting on the same footing the small dissident minority and the great majority of those who were faithful to the Vatican.

He gave the Ministry of Public Worship to a strong-handed official, Falk, who meant to rule the Catholic Church with a rod of iron. The Centre had taken up its stand against the opponents of the Infallibility, and demanded that their chairs in the universities and gymnasiums should not be kept for them. Falk's answer was to get a law passed which ordered the closing over the whole Empire of establishments kept by Jesuits, and the expulsion of the Order.

It was then that in the Reichstag on the 14th of May, 1872, Bismarck gave utterance to the celebrated saying: "Have no fear; neither in body nor in spirit shall we go to Canossa."

Then, in 1875, came the strife over the laws peculiar to Prussia known as the May Laws: the establishment of civil marriage; the obligation on future priests to study for three years in the State Universities; the nomination of Rectors to be submitted to the lay authorities of the Province. Concerning the application of these laws Bismarck, on the 7th of February, 1874, spoke some warlike words:

"It is a question of cutting off the excrescences of clerical ambition, those excrescences which, if sharp steel is not used in time, will end in spreading to such a pitch that the State would have to sub-

mit to the Clerical Power, and would no longer be able to fulfil its duty towards all the religious communities."

The protest against the May Laws was unanimous amongst the Catholics in Prussia, and was especially strong in all Polish circles. The Archbishop of Posen, Ledochowski, declared that he would never submit; the Government put him in prison. Lay commissioners were charged with the administration of the Rectories and Bishoprics, while ecclesiastics were arrested by hundreds.

It seems that, later on, Bismarck felt some shame about this.

"I clearly recognized the mistake when I saw Prussian gendarmes, good fellows, but clumsy, clanking their spurs and trailing their sabres, running after supple and agile priests disappearing through blank doors and recesses."

Pius IX had openly taken the clergy under his protection; he sent the Cardinal's hat to the Archbishop Ledochowski while he was in prison. The opposition of the Centre, too, became more and more violent; confusion reigned everywhere. Bismarck had thought of making the National Liberal party the basis of his majority; but Bennigsen, its head, speaking for it, claimed the establishment of the parliamentary régime. On this point the Chancellor remained refractory; rather than yield it he was ready to approach his adversaries. The situation became more and more strained. Bismarck, as if amazed at the gravity of the crisis, was undecided as to what ought to be done. He

was playing the game of the declared enemies of Catholicism perhaps more than he would have wished. "I must follow them, since I am their chief." The saying is attributed to him, but, in fact, it was Döllinger's.

The accession of Leo XIII in February, 1878, was to bring about a relaxation of the tension. The new Pope wrote directly to the Emperor, who was no party to the violent attitude of his Minister, to beg him "to give to a large portion of his subjects the peace and quiet of their conscience."

At that time Bismarck needed the votes of the Centre for his protectionist policy, and, little by little, he approached his former adversaries. Windthorst did not repulse these advances; he accepted an invitation to one of those evening parties in the Wilhelmstrasse, called *Tabak-Parlament*, at which the Chancellor received the members of the Reichstag and let them smoke and drink. The two enemies were reconciled while drinking beer from the Franciscan Brewery. It was Falk who bore the cost of this reconciliation; he was dismissed in July 1879. The May Laws were speedily suspended, and then abolished, except for that concerning civil marriage.

The reconciliation with the Vatican was soon manifested by significant actions, which the Liberals called the journey to Canossa. The future Emperor Frederick III was received in audience by Leo XIII. The Holy Father sent Bismarck the Order of Christ; he wore its insignia at a great official dinner at Berlin where he was receiving all the Ambassadors.

In 1885, when a quarrel was on the point of breaking out between Germany and Spain on the question of the Carolines, the Chancellor proposed to submit the question to the arbitration of the Pope ; and he accepted without a word the Pontifical decision, though it was in favour of Spain.

In a word, the Kulturkampf, which had been a great war-machine against Catholicism, ended in respect for the rights of the Church. Windthorst and the Centre had prevailed.

In the second half of the nineteenth century Germany passed through a great economic revolution. The country, which up to that time had been almost exclusively agricultural, became very rapidly a great industrial centre. Mining, metallurgical, chemical, textile industries soared upwards in an extraordinary, one might say a prodigious fashion, and the result was an enormous rush of the rural population to the towns. In 1912 Germany counted 44 towns with more than 100,000 inhabitants, against 39 in England and 15 in France. Consequently, the labouring class had developed in a way as excessive as rapid. In this way German soil found itself wonderfully well prepared for the diffusion of Socialist doctrines.

There were two existing schools : that of Lassalle, which was properly German and professed State Socialism, and that of Karl Marx, which was international and preached Collectivism. These merged into one, which took the name of Social Democracy at the time of the Congress of Gotha in 1875. Social

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Democracy had a double programme, political and social, which claimed entire freedom, the suppression of standing armies, collective property of mines, of means of production, transport, etc. The party was strongly organized; at each election for the Reichstag it saw its votes increase: 100,000 in 1871; 350,000 in 1874; 480,000 in 1877; the number of its Deputies to the Imperial Assembly grew from 2 to 9 and to 12; in 1890, the year of the fall of Bismarck, it was to be 24. Saxony, "the Red Kingdom," was one of the party's fortresses.

In face of this redoubtable force, day by day becoming more threatening, Bismarck took his stand as the defender of order, property and all conservative ideas. In 1878 the Emperor was nearly the victim of two attempts at assassination following each other at an interval of less than a month; one by a tin-worker, more than half mad, Hoedel; the other by an anarchist, a doctor of philosophy, Nobiling. The Chancellor took advantage of the indignation aroused by these attempts to make the Socialists responsible for them, and to get a special law passed against "the subversive efforts of Social Democracy." He had set forth his conception of the social problem—on the one hand to ameliorate the situation of the workmen; on the other, to repress any excess of Democracy. He began by the repression. The law of 1878 had been passed for only four years; in fact, this period was twice prolonged, and the law was in force for twelve years. It prohibited any association, meeting, or newspaper "which had for its end the subversion

of the social order, or in which there was any appearance of socialistic tendencies.”

The formula was elastic enough to allow of the suppression, in one year, of 240 associations, and of prohibiting 500 publications; during the twelve years that the law was in force, 900 individuals were expelled and 1,500 condemned to imprisonment.

On the other hand, the Chancellor, who, in 1880, had taken the office of Minister of Commerce and Industry, proposed to reform the economic order of society.

“Whether this intention of the Government be called Socialism or not,” he said at the Reichstag on the 2nd of April, 1881, “matters little. The Government cannot solve the labour question by imitating the ostrich, which hides its head so as not to see the danger.”

In this same speech he spoke of creating “practical Christianity.”

In an Imperial message he made the Emperor say :

“Among the poorer, most numerous, and less educated classes of the population the idea that the State is not only a necessary but a benevolent institution must be kept up. The State ought to assist the well-being of all its members, especially the weak.”

On the 2nd of May, 1884, he himself added : “These gentlemen [the Democrats] will set their snare in vain so soon as the labourer sees that the Government and the legislature take serious care of his welfare.”

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Sundry laws on insurance against accidents ; help for aged and disabled workmen, were the application of this programme of State Socialism.

Financial and economic questions held a great place in Bismarck's relations with the Reichstag ; they resulted in making him himself pass from a free trade to a protectionist policy, and consequently to alter entirely the basis of his parliamentary majority.

Bismarck, who got so far as to multiply the Customs tariffs, acknowledged that his attitude in economic matters was changed, but in these matters only. " It is possible," he said in April 1878, that I have changed my policy. But, anyhow, it is only in an economic matter I have changed ; for, in politics, I do not think I have been seen to vary much. . . . When I came into power, I had but one aim—the unification of Germany under the hegemony of Prussia. All else was accessory ; to it I have subordinated all considerations, economic or otherwise."

The founding of the German Colonial Empire goes back to the last years of his Ministry ; but it must be said at once that here he was not a promoter, but rather a colonial in his own despite. The *Weltpolitik* and the universal Pan-Germanism which were the fashion under the megalomaniac, William II, were things almost unknown to Bismarck and the statesmen of his generation ; they were satisfied with *Deutsche Politik*. As for himself, his political field was somewhat limited, including Germany, Austria-

The German Colonies

Hungary, Russia-in-Europe, France, England and something of Italy, upon which he looked down with infinite contempt. "The Italians," he said in 1880, "are like those ravens that live on carrion and hang about the fields of battle waiting to get something to eat"; and he delighted to quote the saying of a Russian Diplomat about the Italians: "What! they're still claiming something when they haven't lost a battle!"

Outside these five or six European States, the world did not exist for the occupant of the Wilhelmstrasse; his horizon scarce stretched beyond London, Paris, Vienna and Petersburg.

In February 1874 the *Times* had published the unfounded rumour of the possible cession of the French settlements in India to Germany. "I don't want colonies," Bismarck declared; "all they are good for is the creation of sinecures. That's all England and Spain do with them. If we Germans had colonies, we should resemble the Polish nobles, who have mantles of ermine on their backs and no shirts underneath."

It may be supposed that his talk about colonies just then was a little like that of the fox on the grapes.

Still, when he saw the great development of German trade, when he saw the merchants of Hamburg and Bremen on the way to make their fortunes "on the other side" (*Drüben*) he came to think that to grow coffee or cotton on a German soil had great advantages; the thing tallied with his programme of deliberate discarding of a policy

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of splendour for one concerned only with *Interessen-Politik*. "It is not our business," he said in 1882, à propos of affairs in Egypt, "to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for the good of others."

The private initiative of German commercial houses began to produce results at some points on the African coasts, and Bismarck decided to give these enterprises the protection of the State. And thus, in 1883, arose South-West Africa, the first German Colony; then, in 1884, Togoland and the Cameroons; then, later still, East Africa.

The International Conference for the delimitation of the Congo and the partitions of Africa was held in 1885 at Berlin, under the presidency of the Chancellor. He seemed to have become the arbiter of Africa, as, seven years earlier, he had been on the Eastern question. At a committee of the Reichstag a Deputy expressed the fear that the founding of these colonies might bring forth disputes with France for which Germany might not be able to have sufficient naval forces on the spot. In his peremptory fashion the Chancellor replied: "It is not a question of naval forces; Herr Bamberger forgets that France lies before the attacking gates of Metz." (*Frankreich liegt vor der Ausfallsthoren von Metz.*)

What remains to-day of that African Empire on which Bismarck's successors formed such hopes? The present war has wholly given it into the hands of Germany's enemies; the Germans at this hour have neither ermine mantles nor shirts!

The work of the organization and consolidation of the Empire of which we have given a hurried sketch represents remarkable activity on Bismarck's part. In his relations with the Reichstag he had almost always to remake his majority ; he had begun to govern with the Left ; and then, little by little, he was led to lean upon the Right.

**Difficulties
with the
Reichstag**

The semi-official Press was trained to follow his evolutions ; he supplied it liberally for this end from the secret funds, called the "reptile funds." This term, become classic, dated back to a speech of the Chancellor's, on the 29th of January, 1864, before the Second Prussian Chamber, when he had the property of King George of Hanover and of the Elector Frederick William of Hesse-Nassau, two of the vanquished of 1866, sequestrated, under the pretext of getting the protests of their partisans silenced.

"We want," he said, "to finish with these guilty manœuvres that sport with the tranquillity of a great nation and the peace of Europe. We must pursue these reptiles to their lairs and see what they do there. Let us not, therefore, blame ourselves for the necessity we are in for making such use of this money."

Even Bismarck's own partisans sometimes hesitated to follow him because of his violence in all he took up ; and, as to his adversaries, they gave him no respite ; it was as if they took a malicious pleasure in provoking his anger.

Therefore his relations with the Reichstag were

Bismarck

almost always difficult and disturbed by many a storm.

The Emperor had made him a present of some work of art for the Christmas festival of 1884, and Bismarck answered him in these words :

“ I respectfully thank your Majesty for your magnificent Christmas present. The work of art your Majesty has sent me reminds me somewhat of my actual position. While the centaur tries with both arms to hoist the ram upon his shoulders, there comes a woman who hangs her whole weight on his beard. It is just like me. While my hands are full of duties to your Majesty and the country, parliamentary opposition drives at me and hangs on to me, at the risk of knocking me down while I bear the weight of affairs. The only difference is that the Opposition is infinitely uglier than the woman who hangs on to the centaur's beard.

“ But this will not prevent my cheerfully and firmly bearing my load on my shoulders so long as God gives me the strength, and I enjoy the favour of your Majesty.”

Bismarck often spoke of his retirement. In 1880 he said : “ As you see, my health is still uncertain. Yet I don't quite know what I have to complain of ; I sleep excellently, nine hours a night (he was then sixty-five), I eat with good appetite ; but I get tired at once, and can't stand upright for long. It is the result of last year's overwork and the things I have gone through.”

In reality he was of those who die at their desk,

unless they break their neck in some unforeseen accident.

Nobiling's attempt on William I in 1878 had the effect of attaching Bismarck still closer to the person of the old Emperor.

"I will never leave him alone," said the Chancellor. "I took an oath of it to myself when I saw him lying on the ground out there after the attempt. I swore to myself then that I would never forsake him, and, whatever may happen, I will keep my oath."

In spite of everything, that indefatigable fighter, the Iron Chancellor, declared he was fatigued, harassed, worn out; (*müde, todmüde*) he was tired to death; and, following the example of the great chief, the whole of Germany, about 1881, was suffering from "Empire-weariness" (*Reichsmüdigkeit*), to use the picturesque neologism which was invented for this fit of fatigue and boredom.

In spite of the intimacy between the two men, the relations between the Emperor and the Chancellor were not without frequent collisions.

**Relations with
William I
and the Em-
press Augusta** sions. The Sovereign had too great a sense of his rights; the Minister too great a sense of his political superiority, which he did not conceal when with his intimate friends. "If I went," he said in 1885, "what would be the result? The entire German Empire rests only on the confidence they have in me abroad. Ah! no doubt I might go temporarily and see how they would get on, and then come back as soon as the trial had been

made. But it is dangerous to make such experiments."

In 1875 he had given up the Presidency of the Council, passing it on to Roon, and keeping only foreign affairs. He congratulated himself on this determination, which, however, took effect but for a few months ; but there was something ironical in his self-congratulation with regard to his relations with William I.

"Since I ceased to be President of the Council of the Prussian Ministry, I get on much better with the Emperor. I'm no longer always at his heels, and, when he has some unpractical idea or queer plan in his head, I'm no longer there to bother him."

The Empress Augusta had not the gift of pleasing the Chancellor, any more than had her daughter-in-law later on. This is easily understood. Born at Weimar, the daughter of the Grand-Duke Charles Frederick of Saxe-Weimar and of the Russian Grand-Duchess Maria Paulowna, growing up in the atmosphere of the German Athens, where she had known Goethe—Russian, too, on the maternal side—not only was there nothing Prussian about her, but also she represented German culture at the time when this culture owed its origin to Goethe, Schiller, Wieland, Herder, Kotzebue ; it was the age, which seems prehistoric to-day, when German civilization had not yet been put into barracks with Prussian corporals mounting guard all around. Moreover, Augusta, Princess Royal, Queen, Empress, in spite of her perfect manners, had never concealed the fact that the Prussianism of the officers and officials

amongst whom she was obliged to live inspired her with but scant sympathy.

There was, besides, another grievance: she had a great taste for French literature; about the time of the Congress of Berlin she liked to talk of French writers, French customs, French artists, with a young Normal School student who was to have a brilliant career in Diplomacy.

Bismarck was consistently unjust and mistrustful towards this remarkable woman, accused her of having always wanted to play a part behind the scenes, first with the Liberals, then with the Ultramontanes and the Court Preachers.

"Like Eugénie in 1870," he said, "she has, as I have found out since, given direct instructions to officials. The Emperor is old, and lets himself be more and more influenced by her. She interferes, too, in foreign matters; she has got it into her head that it is her vocation to plead the cause of peace everywhere—to be, as she calls it, the Angel of Peace."

According to Bismarck, all the enemies of the Chancellor grouped themselves around her; she was "the crystallizing point of this unanimous agreement."

On the anniversary of the Crown-Prince's birth, in 1877, some one reminded Bismarck that it would be the proper thing to send him a congratulatory telegram. "Yes, of course," he answered; "it must be sent—for form's sake. Ah! if it was his mother! No fear of my sending that woman one—even for form's sake."

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The Emperor being ill, the Empress spent almost all her time with him, which exasperated Bismarck. "And that's love, is it? Nonsense! It's pure comedy—conventional affection. There's nothing natural about that woman; she's as artificial inside as out."

The Emperor was not ignorant of the reciprocal hostility of his Chancellor and the Empress, but his affection for his wife, a deep affection made up of courtesy and respect, did not prevent his recognition of all he owed to Bismarck or his giving him his entire confidence.

These two men were bound to understand each other; one was the absolute King of Prussia—completely and totally King of Prussia, the *Stockpreussenkönig*; the other, at any period of his career and through all his political evolutions, had always been the champion of downright Prussianism.

"During this long space of time I have seen many friends become enemies; the confidence and the favour of your Majesty have alone remained unalterable. It is in that that I find the most glorious reward of my toil, and the greatest consolation for my pains. I love my two countries, the German country as well as the Prussian country; but I could not have cheerfully served them both if I had not had the satisfaction of my King to encourage me."

Saint-Simon wrote a striking passage on the relations of Louis XIII and Richelieu; it might almost be reproduced to fit those of William I and Bismarck, taking heed not only of times and per-

sonages, but especially of the difference between policy *à la Française* and German policy. Let us borrow just a few lines from the author of the "Parallèle des trois premiers Rois Bourbons"; the transposition will speak for itself.

"I do not mean," he said, "that I wish to deny that the Cardinal was in many respects the greatest man the last centuries have produced, but it is no less true that not one of the great things done in his day was done but after being discussed between the King and Richelieu in the most profound secrecy. Therefore one cannot, in justice, deprive Louis of a great part in all great things that were conceived and executed during his reign; though, at the same time, it was impossible that the fame for them should not be assigned to Richelieu then, and remain his ever since."

Bismarck praised two of his master's qualifications: his attention to business and the rectitude of his judgment. "His zeal," he said, "was due to the high sense he had of his obligations; to the accomplishment of his duty as a Sovereign he brought a far from usual amount of good sense, not supported by understanding, no doubt, but also in no way distorted."

William's good sense had led him to discover Bismarck, to hold to him despite his enemies and to keep him till the end, undazzled by his character or his fame; he allowed him to manage things because he had always recognized that he was the man of his own policy.

William I died on the 9th of March, 1888, in his

ninety-second year. On the eve of his death he had a long talk with Bismarck ; he told him he relied on him ; that he must remain in office and faithfully serve his successors ; he exacted a promise from him to help his grandson with his experience, and, if he were called to reign, to keep loyally beside him. At one moment, in the weakening of his mind, he took the Chancellor for his grandson, Prince William, and said familiarly : " You must always keep up good relations with the Emperor of Russia ; there's no need to argue about that."

We know how the grandson was to keep on good terms with Russia and the Emperor of Russia.

When, on the morrow, Bismarck announced in the Reichstag the death of the Sovereign whose collaborator and adviser he had been for twenty-six years, his voice broke with emotion.

The new reign began under the saddest of auspices. The Crown-Prince Frederick William, who began his reign at the age of fifty-
The Emperor Frederick III five, had been for some months suffering from a cancer in the larynx, which could have nothing but a fatal end ; after an operation he had completely lost the power of speech. Nevertheless, devoted to duty before all else, he was not willing to withdraw from the obligations of his birth ; he, with his wife, left the villa at San Remo where he was dying.

The reign of Frederick III was to last scarcely three months, three months of uninterrupted agony.

The relations of Bismarck and the Crown-Prince Frederick had often been strained. One was a man

of authority, with rough manners ; the other a Liberal, and a Prince who liked to please. Bismarck partly extended the antipathy he had for his wife to the Crown-Prince himself. The great fault of the daughter of Prince Albert and Queen Victoria was that she was English, that is to say, Liberal ; the Chancellor called her the Englishwoman, the disciple of Gladstone ; and, according to him, she did nothing but propagate English influence and serve the interests of England ; she had never ceased to look upon England as her country ; she had shed tears over the annexation of Slesvig and Hanover ; she had much more influence over her husband than was desirable ; she was always trying to indoctrinate him with her ideas. And Bismarck always came back to the unpardonable crime : she was English ; and he detested England with all the force of his Prussian hate.

One day, towards the end of the siege of Paris, in a familiar talk, he gave free vent to his sentiments about England and the Crown-Princess Victoria.

“ No, this is too much ! ” he exclaimed, “ those English have unheard-of pretensions ! Would you believe that now they want to send a gunboat up the Seine to look for the English families that have remained in Paris ? I know all about that : what they really want is to find out if we have sunk torpedoes, so that the French vessels may afterwards go up the river behind them. They can’t endure little Prussia increasing in such a way ; Prussians exist for them only as long as they can

Bismarck

use them as mercenaries. I'm sure of it ; it's what all the higher class in England thinks. They've never known us, and have always done everything they could to injure us. The Princess Royal is the incarnation of what I'm telling you. She is full of the condescension she showed in deigning to marry into our country."

The new Emperor and his wife, deeply attached to each other and both of noble character, were willing to forget, in the interest of the Empire, the rough speeches of a Minister who was puffed up with his own importance, but indispensable ; nothing was changed in the official position of the Chancellor. On taking the title of Emperor and King, Frederick III published a manifesto in which he praised " the faithful and courageous adviser who gave form to the political plans of the great Emperor and assured their success " ; and he was declared " indispensable to the country."

The only notable event of this three months' reign was a dispute between the Empress Victoria and the Chancellor, in which the Emperor decided in favour of the Chancellor.

Already in the reign of William I there had been talk of a marriage between the Princess Victoria of Prussia and Prince Alexander of Battenberg. This was the Prince who, in 1879, had become Prince of Bulgaria, and to whom, on his starting for Sofia, Bismarck had made this prophetically ironic speech : " It will give you some pleasant memories."

Princess Victoria was the daughter of the Crown-

Prince Frederick ; her brother William had called her one day a goose and a turkey-hen because she boasted of the superiority of English life. A romantic love was born between the two young people. Bismarck flatly declared that the marriage was impossible ; it would embroil the Hohenzollerns with the Romanovs because of the bad relations of Battenberg with Alexander III. The real reason may have been that it did not displease Bismarck to make himself disagreeable to the "English-woman."

The Crown-Prince became Emperor, and the mother and daughter believed that the marriage-plan might be taken up again, all the more easily because Battenberg was no longer Prince of Bulgaria. In intimate talk Bismarck spoke very cavalierly of the *Battenbergerin*, as he called her.

"It's true," he said, "that Prince Alexander is a handsome man ; he has a magnificent carriage. But she'll accommodate herself to any other wooer, so long as he looks like a man."

As soon as there was a question for the second time of the marriage, in April 1888, he once more declared that the thing was impossible, always because of Russia ; as for him, he would prefer to resign. Frederick III, like his father, did not give his consent to the marriage.

But the unhappy Emperor did not fear displeasing his Chancellor ; he obliged the Home Secretary, Puttkamer, a creature of Bismarck's, to send in his resignation because of the indifference

Bismarck

with which he managed electoral matters. This energetic action preceded his death by seven days.

Some hours before he died, he took the hand of the Empress and put it into that of the Chancellor as a sign of reconciliation.

On the 15th of June the martyrdom of Frederick III came to an end.

The new Emperor-King, William II, was a man of twenty-nine, nervous, of an exuberant disposition, very anxious to make himself known; he did not conceal his admiration for his grandfather's policy and for the Minister who had managed it. Quite recently he had expressed his feelings for Bismarck in a resounding fashion.

On the 1st of April, the Chancellor's birthday, he had come in person to the Wilhelmstrasse to give him his good wishes, and had invited himself to dinner. At the end of the meal he proposed a toast, which contained a very unkind allusion to the approaching death of the Emperor, his father, but which did not surprise those who knew that he detested his parents.

"The Empire," he said, glass in hand, "is like an Army Corps which has lost its principal general on the field of battle, and sees its own commander seriously wounded. In so critical a situation, the hearts of forty-six millions of Germans can but turn with hope to the standard and the standard-bearer, to whom they have given all their confidence. The standard-bearer is our illustrious, our great

Chancellor. Let him lead us ; we will follow him. Long may he live ! ”

On the 25th of June, the tenth day of his reign, William had read his first speech from the throne in the Reichstag, and at the end of it he had held out his hand to Bismarck with a theatrical gesture, as if to invest him before the Assembly with his Imperial and Royal favour. The old Chancellor of seventy-three and the young Emperor of twenty-nine, entirely pleased with each other, were in perfect agreement.

At that time a polemical matter was making a great noise ; it had to do with the posthumous publication of the Diary of the Emperor Frederick in 1870 and 1871, in which the conduct of Bismarck at that period was often severely judged. The Chancellor, whose pride was ungovernable and who thought he guessed this publication to be a piece of revenge of the “ Englishwoman,” fretted and fumed. “ We’ll begin by saying it is a forgery,” he said. “ Personally I feel more sure even than you do of the authenticity of the Diary. But that doesn’t matter ; it must be treated as a forgery.”

The calumny did no good, and then Bismarck had an action brought for violation of State secrets ; but the action ended in the acquittal of the accused, a professor at the Strasburg University.

This affair, a scandal which put the Chancellor to confusion, made no alteration in his relations with William II ; he spoke of him with tenderness, as in this confidential talk dated the 27th of September, 1888 :

"He shows me great consideration. You remember how attentive and obliging he was the last time he came here [Friedrichsruh]. In the evening he was astonished that I had waited till eleven o'clock for him and had not gone to bed. Ah! his grandfather would never have said a thing like that. And in the morning, it was he who waited for me. Contrary to all his habits, he got up at nine o'clock, because he thought I always slept till that hour. He came into my room while I was washing, half-undressed. He laid his hand prettily on my shoulder, and I had hastily to put on my dressing-gown so as to receive him properly."

"You have a docile and grateful pupil who helps you in your duties as statesman." "Yes; there is scarcely anything in him to find fault with but matters of no importance: for example, the style of some of his speeches; he makes use of new words that he has picked up from newspapers. But that's just the vivacity of youth, and he'll correct it in time. It's better to have too much spirit than not enough."

It was not to be long before Bismarck discovered that the verbose young Emperor, always helmeted and spurred, had a great deal too much spirit.

The Tsar Alexander III had come to Berlin at the end of October 1889. The Chancellor had a long talk with him, trying to convince him that the Triple Alliance was the best guarantee of peace in Europe.

"Yes, I believe you," answered Alexander, "and

I have confidence in you ; but are you sure you will remain in office ? ”

“ Certainly, your Majesty ; I am absolutely certain to remain Minister all my life.”

Five months later Bismarck had vacated his office.

The Chancellor had always had a wonderful insight into men and things ; he had always been able to guess at any danger which might threaten his position or his policy, and had consequently guarded against it. It will be remembered how von Arnim had learnt this to his cost. But was his perspicacity beginning to weaken with age ? or was it rather his inordinate pride and his overweening belief in his own genius and infallibility which prevented his having any idea that the time was coming when his services would be held useless and even disagreeable ? He had no suspicion that the new Emperor would not have the patience of Louis XIV, who had felt able to wait for the death of Mazarin, and that he would not shrink from an act of authority, or even brutality, to convince Germany and the world that the Empire had but one master, himself.

Unaware of the storm which was brewing against him, and which was to break out with the suddenness and force of a thunderbolt, Bismarck, in 1889, had retired to his estate at Friedrichsruh to spend there the autumn and winter, taking up once more the country-gentleman life which he loved above all else. He kept touch with politics, but from afar, and without the uninterrupted obsession that beset him in the Wilhelmstrasse.

Bismarck

Suddenly, at the end of January 1890, a telegram from his son, Count Herbert, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, recalled him to Berlin.

Some weeks earlier a strike had broken out among the miners of the Rhine Valley ; this was a fine

**The Inter-
national
Conference
on Labour
Matters**

opportunity for the young Emperor, who thought himself fitted for everything, to settle the social question once for all. He had received in person the workmen's delegates and had said to them :

“ My ears will always be open to just claims ; but, if you move, I'll have the lot of you fired on.”

Leaving this forcible style aside for the moment, he laid before the Crown Council the plan of an inquiry into the condition of factory workers so as “ to ensure by legislative measures the health, the morality and the economic needs of the workman.”

Bismarck strongly opposed this idea, for he was hostile to any State intervention in that kind of matter. To guard against the move, or to delay its results, he proposed to the Emperor the calling together of an International Conference. If Germany, in fact, were alone in regulating the duration of work, she would find herself beaten by foreign competition. William accepted the idea of this Conference.

On the 24th of February, 1890, an Imperial Rescript ordered “ the opening of negotiations with France, England, Belgium and Switzerland, with regard to an International agreement on the possibility of satisfying the needs and wishes of the workmen.”

The Rescript did not bear, beside William's signature, that of the Chancellor. It was the first time for twenty-seven years that an official document had not received Bismarck's countersign. There could be no doubt of the complete emancipation of the young Telemachus or of the coming disgrace of the old Mentor.

Bismarck attempted to win back the game. He reminded his master that an ordinance of Frederick-William IV, given in 1852, declared that no important document could be prepared without the actual participation of the President of the Council.

The Emperor, as his only answer, spoke of repealing this ordinance, and, meanwhile, he asked the Chancellor for a written report on the question.

While this was going on, on the 14th of March, Windthorst, the Leader of the Centre, paid Bismarck a visit. Elections had quite recently formed a new Reichstag ; and the object of Windthorst's visit was, no doubt, to look into the situation as it affected the different parties, and especially the Centre.

William II knew of this visit ; he believed that a political coalition was being plotted against him there, and the very same day he sent the Chief of his Civil Cabinet, Lucanus, to ask for explanations. To the envoy Bismarck replied :

" Kindly tell his Majesty that I recognize in no one whatsoever the right to dictate to me the choice of persons who cross my threshold."

The next day, the 15th of March, the two adver-

Bismarck

series, face to face, played the great scene of the fifth act.

William went in person to the Wilhelmstrasse at ten o'clock in the morning, without letting himself be announced. Bismarck was still in bed ; he got up hastily.

"What do your negotiations with Windthorst mean ? " asked the Emperor abruptly.

Bismarck answered that he had negotiated nothing ; and then, with entire self-possession, he added : " I can allow of no supervision in my relations with the Deputies, and I grant to no one the right to give orders in my house. . . . "

"Not even when I give orders to you as a Sovereign ? "

"Not even then. The orders of my Emperor stop before the door of Princess Bismarck's drawing-room. Moreover, it is but to keep a promise made to the Emperor William I that I have remained in the service of his grandson. If I am troublesome to your Majesty I am ready to retire."

The same day the International Conference was opened in the Chancellor's palace.

On the 16th of March Bismarck said to his faithful Busch, who could not believe his ears :

"I can't stop here any longer ; the sooner I go the better. I can't go on in this way. He goes so far as to want to know whom I receive, and he has spies who scrutinize those who come in and go out. . . . He wrote this Rescript [on labour questions] because he has unlimited belief in himself, though he knows nothing whatever about business. The

Rescript can only do harm. I told him so, but he is much too arrogant to listen to me."

During the morning of the 17th of March General von Hahnke, Chief of the Military Cabinet, went to the Chancellor's.

"The Emperor," he said, "expects the resignation of the Prince; he will be ready to receive it at two o'clock."

Bismarck replied that his health would not allow him to go out that day; he wanted some time still for drawing up his deed of resignation. In the afternoon he unbosomed himself again to Maurice Busch.

"Ah! things have progressed more quickly than I thought. At first I thought that he would be grateful to me if I still remained some years with him; but, on the contrary, I perceived that his one idea, his one desire, was to get rid of me so that he might govern by himself—with his own genius, his own glory. He has had enough of the old Mentor; he wants more docile agents now. But, as for me, I cannot make up my mind to bend the knee before him; I cannot make up my mind to lie under the table like a dog. He wants to break with Russia, and he hasn't the courage to ask the Liberals for the increase of the Army. I've had enough of court intrigues; enough of their insolence, enough of being spied upon. My retirement is absolute, final; I will not be responsible, to crown my career, for the blunders of a presumptuous and inexperienced mind."

That same evening William again had Bismarck

asked for his resignation ; a special donation was assured him.

“ I don't doubt his Majesty's goodness,” answered the Chancellor bitterly ; “ but I have a career behind me that does not permit me to end with a tip, such as one gives to the postman on New Year's Day.”

At last, on the 18th of March, the Chancellor drew up his letter of resignation, which he did not send in till the 20th.

He began by giving long explanations concerning the Royal Ordinance of the 8th of September, 1852 ; he could not admit for himself the *capitis deminutio* which would result from the revocation of this ordinance. After six long pages he ended thus :

“ If I may trust my impressions during the last weeks and the communications made to me yesterday by the Civil and Military Cabinets
The Resignation of your Majesty, I feel persuaded that I enter into the views of your Majesty in handing in my resignation, and I can therefore count with certainty on its acceptance.”

And last of all came this paragraph, the Parthian arrow :

“ It is already a year since I should have asked your Majesty to relieve me of my office, if I had not believed that your Majesty wished still to profit by the experience and capacity of the faithful servant of your predecessors. Now, I am sure that your Majesty has no need of me, and I may retire from political life without fear that public

opinion may think my decision too premature.—
Bismarck."

The next day Bismarck received at his table the Delegates of the Labour Conference; he was in very good spirits, and had never eaten with better appetite.

"You see, Monsieur Jules Simon, a man cannot die until he has smoked a hundred thousand cigars and drunk five thousand bottles of champagne."

"I am delighted to hear it, your Excellency," answered the French Delegate, "for then I have a long time still to live."

On receipt of the longed-for letter, the Emperor offered Bismarck the title of Duke of Lauenburg.

"I humbly ask your Majesty," he replied, "to permit me in the future to bear only the name and the title I have borne up to now."

Public opinion heard of Bismarck's resignation with a feeling of amazement, but also of relief; for twenty-eight years he had weighed so heavily on men and things! Nevertheless, on the day of his departure from Berlin for Friedrichsrub he was accompanied to the station by an enormous crowd, cheering him and covering him with flowers.

The fall was a hard one for this old fighter of seventy-five; he still felt enough force in himself to carry on the rough battle of which his Ministry had consisted; to cope with the Reichstag, as aforesaid with the Landtag; to preside over European conferences; to settle quarrels; and now there was nothing to do but to manage his estates.

**The last
years at
Friedrichsrub**

Bismarck

"I shall have to saw wood," he said sadly, "since I can no longer saw men."

Outside the family intimacy which he greatly enjoyed, his principal pleasure was in writing his "Thoughts and Memories"; it was the picture of him that he wished to leave to posterity, a picture faked, as in all autobiographies, and all the more faked when the personage has played a greater part in the world's stage. He had a newspaper at his service—the *Hamburger Nachrichten*, and in it he had his successor, General Caprivi, torn to pieces. At Court they pretended not to see it, but the irritation on both sides was extreme.

To-day, when the Pan-Germanist Germany of William II is possessed by the madness of greatness, the fever of extravagance, which, for her, as for the sick seized with general paralysis, are the infallible symptoms of a fatal termination, it is truly curious to see the advice to his successors which Bismarck had published in the Press. He was opposed to all fresh wars: "By war, nothing more can be obtained; only what was gained can be lost." "Germany ought to be supremely indifferent to Balkan politics." "If Austria wishes to pursue private interests in the Balkans, she ought to seek support, not in Germany, but from the countries that have interests in the East, England, France, Italy. The Balkans do not interest Germany."

The Empire of the Seas and the *Weltpolitik*, questions into which William II cast himself headlong, were not matters for Germany. "I think it

unnecessary on the part of Germany to rival the French or English Fleets. Still, we ought to be strong enough on the sea to be able to influence the second-rate Powers which we cannot reach by land. We must guard against exaggerated economy in naval matters, but also we ought to distrust fantastic projects which would put us into collision with nations which are important to our position in Europe. . . . Nothing could be more absolutely contrary to the interests of Germany than to engage in enterprises more or less daring and adventurous with the sole desire of putting our fingers into every dish and flattering the vanity of the nation or satisfying the ambitions of those who govern it."

That these counsels would one day prove so many prophecies was not suspected. But anyhow, for the mass of the German people, the fallen god became more and more the national hero. William II had the good taste to understand it. In 1895, on Bismarck's eightieth birthday, he went in person to Friedrichsruh to offer the former Chancellor a sword of honour, thus inaugurating the fêtes which took the character of an apotheosis.

But Bismarck would not lay down his arms. The visit to Paris in October 1896 of the Tsar Nicholas inspired the *Hamburger Nachrichten* with a very violent article against the policy which, little by little, had estranged Russia from Germany. Once more it was aimed at Caprivi, or rather at his successor, Hohenlohe ; but this was forgetting the Congress of Berlin, at which Bismarck himself had begun the work of estrangement.

Bismarck

It was the last roar of the wounded lion. In spite of his strong constitution and grand look, the old man's health was declining. The death of his wife, which happened in 1894, after forty-seven years of marriage, had been a grievous sorrow to him ; he himself was tired of life. He died, after a few hours' illness, on the 30th of July, 1898, aged eighty-three years and four months. He had arranged his funeral beforehand, so that it might bear a character of quietness and simplicity.

"I will not have official lies on my tomb," he had said. He had pointed out the spot in the park at Friedrichsruh in which he wished to lie and had drawn up the epitaph to be read on his tomb : "Bismarck, faithful servant of the Emperor William I."

At Berlin, on one side of the Königsplatz, in front of the Palace of the Reichstag, Bismarck's monument, the work of Begas, has stood since 1901 ; it is colossal, as suits the man and the country. Among the allegorical groups that surmount the pedestal, in a fine bronze, the artist has represented a giant blacksmith, forging on an anvil an enormous sword. Such is properly the picture which history must keep of the Iron Chancellor : he is the man who forged Germany by repeated blows of the hammer.

That he changed his home policy ; that he began by being nothing but a country squire of frankly reactionary spirit, a Prussian of a narrow conservatism, to become one day the partisan of Universal Suffrage and the incarnation of the Germanic

Fatherland : that has its interest, but it is not what history will best remember.

What history will, above all, remember is this : in 1862, when Bismarck took the Presidency of the Council, Prussia was an ill-constituted body, with gaps among its members ; she held only second rank among the German States. In 1866 Prussia had soldered its bits together into a block stretching from the Rhine to the Niemen, her supremacy assured in an incontestable fashion. On the other hand, in 1862 the Germanic Confederation was still the survival of the Congress of Vienna ; an agglomeration of States existing only to be jealous of each other and to manifest their powerlessness. In 1871 the German Empire was a vigorous organism, well tempered, held under a strong discipline by the chief who had put himself at its head, who had organized it and led it to effective action.

How had these two things been done ?

It was a work of " fire and blood," the result of three wars, against Denmark, against Austria, against France.

With regard to Austria and her Allies, after the violent passage of arms of 1866, Bismarck was capable of showing wisdom and proof of relative moderation, for he reserved for his master the collaboration of a " second," and prepared for the return of some of the vanquished States to the German Fatherland.

With regard to Denmark, in 1864, and France in 1871, he gave full licence to his inherent brutality.

Bismarck

The annexation of Holstein and Slesvig, the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine, were the result of two robberies. Denmark wept in silence over the loss of her children ; France protested with all her force against the violence done her. What did it matter to the thief ?

Bismarck was not of those who demand that their victims should kiss the hand that strikes them. He knew himself to be detested, hated, cursed, in Prussia, in Germany, in Europe, and gloried in it. In the Reichstag one day (the 16th of January, 1874) he said : " I have numerous enemies. Go from the Garonne, to begin in Gascony, to the Vistula ; from the Belt to the Tiber ; look along the banks of our German rivers, the Oder and the Rhine, and you will own that I am the most cordially detested man of the day. But of this hatred I feel a profound disdain."

In a telegram to von Arnim, on the 24th of February, 1875, à propos of France, he applied to himself Sulla's words : " We did not want the war ; but we are always ready to make war again when further presumptuous actions of France force us into it. *Oderint dum metuant.*"

And his Germany congratulates itself on inspiring the same sentiments as himself. On the 1st of April, 1917, on the 102nd anniversary of Bismarck's birth, a Professor beyond the Rhine exclaimed, " We are the most detested people in the world, but we ought to be proud of it."

To Bismarck and to the Germany of our days the old song Luther's mother sang to her son is mar-

vellously suitable : " Nobody loves us, neither thee nor me ; it is the fault of us both."

The Chancellor prided himself on being a realist ; his admirers in Germany applaud him for having had, in the highest degree, the sense of realities (*den Wirklichkeitssinn*). But was not this realist rather a politician with short views ? He ignored, in fact, that violence and hate are not only sterile, but also that sooner or later they turn against the brutal strength that used them. The Poles, the Slesingers, the Alsace-Lorrainers, who are none of them German in any way, will never forgo their resistance and their hostility. The agreement born of the community of joys and sorrows, the community of traditions and aspirations—that is the cement which binds a nation. Force, however brutal or powerful it is believed, can never have but an ephemeral action. Bismarck denied having said, " Might is above Right." In fact he did not say it ; how could he have said it ? According to Bergson's words, " In his eyes right was simply what the stronger wills, which is recorded by the victor in the law he imposes on the vanquished."

That was the whole moral philosophy of the country squire who became Chancellor, who, under every circumstance of his political life, was a man without scruple or pity.

Here is a saying of his : " When I have an enemy I crush him."

The strong man had no doubt of the durability of his work ; nevertheless, at times he felt a sort of horror of his own brutality. One day, at Varzin,

Bismarck

in October 1877, he was sad and melancholy ; yet it was the time when his political work seemed at its apogee. " My soul is sad," he said. " I have never in my long life made any one happy, neither my friends, nor my family, nor myself. I have done harm, much harm. It is I who am the cause of three great wars ; it is I, who on fields of battle, have had eighty thousand men killed, who, to-day still, are being mourned by their mothers, their brothers, their sisters, their wives. But all that is between me alone and God. I never got any happiness out of it, and to-day I feel my soul anxious and troubled over it."

Without waiting for the judgment of God, the French will never forgive Bismarck the crimes he committed against them in 1871. After Sadowa he took nothing from Austria because he wanted to be reconciled to her some day. From us, he took a piece of our flesh ; and so was willing that between his people and us there should be for ever a river of blood and hate. The Crown-Prince Frederick had been able in 1871 to foresee the consequences of the violence done to Alsace-Lorraine, when he said, " France is now, and will be for ever, our natural enemy."

The present war has set face to face the two Powers ; on one side the Germany of Bismarck, and of William II, wholly imbued with the views of the Chancellor, the doctrines, the manias, of its Emperor, of its officers, of its professors, the powers of prey and death which dream of a World-Imperialism ; on the other, France, who, with her noble

Allies, fights for French Alsace-Lorraine, for the Alsace-Lorrainers of Rumania, of Serbia, of Poland, of Armenia ; for the liberation of Belgium ; who fights, in a word, for Right and Liberty.

Right and Liberty—these are factors unknown to Bismarck's compatriots since Germany was Prussianized ; for France of the Crusades and of the Revolution, those sacred words have a magic virtue. In them there is a force that nothing can conquer ; a force superior to all injustices and all tyrannies—all the Bismarcks and all the Kaisers in the world, giants with feet of clay, will not prevail against Right and Liberty. As Montalembert said of Poland, that Alsace-Lorraine of Eastern Europe which stands erect and confident through the most tragic catastrophes of history, Right lives in our hearts, it lives in them "like an inextinguishable flame ; it is at that flame that one day God will light the fire of His justice and His vengeance."

Bismarck, as we have seen, wished to have inscribed on his tomb the proudly simple epitaph, "Faithful servant of the Emperor William I." What does this mean ? In faithfully serving William I, he served lying, violence, robbery. On the tombs of our children, mowed down in the trenches, hurled from the clouds, perished in the waves, we put this inscription :

"Servants of the Right, of Honour, of Liberty, History and the human conscience will always know where their admiration and gratitude are due. Of the dead man of Friedrichsruh they will say that, if he was a genius, he was the genius of evil, and

Bismarck

that his work, conceived in violence, will perish in violence."

Of the French and the Allies killed since 1914, they will say that they were the avengers of morality, the soldiers of humanity, and that their glorious work will be crowned by the Triumph of Right.



Back—"Bismarck."

160416

Bismarck-Schönhausen, Otto Eduard Leopold,
Fürst von
Lacour-Gayet, Georges
Bismarck. tr. from the French by Herbert Capes.

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